

Safe Environment



St. Joseph
Congregation

FORWARD

“Be careful, therefore, to do as the Lord, your God, has commanded you, not turning aside to the right or the left, but following exactly the way prescribed for you by the Lord, your God, that you may live and prosper, and may have long life in the land which you are to occupy.”

Deuteronomy 5:32-33

Based on our Christian belief in the divinely bestowed dignity of all people, we commit to providing a safe environment for all people using our premises and programs. As Christians, we extend a welcoming hand to all, regardless of creed, race, disabilities, gender, age or personal preferences. However, we will not condone abuse of any kind. This includes physical, psychological and sexual abuse and harassment. By implementing these safeguards, we hope to reduce the risk of such abuse within our community by modeling and by on-going education within our parish. This policy intends to provide protection not only for the children and adults who participate in activities, but also for the workers and teachers who provide services. We hope to convey the importance of safe environments in the homes, work places and communities in which we live.

We expect all who work in the name of St. Joseph Congregation to abide by these safeguards. We will inform all who rent our facilities on an on-going basis of these policies.

SPECIFIC BEHAVIORS THAT WILL NOT BE TOLERATED

St. Joseph is committed to an environment in which people are treated with dignity, courtesy and respect. It is our policy to provide all employees, students, volunteers, visitors and members with an environment free from all forms of discrimination, including sexual harassment. It is the policy of this organization to provide an environment that is free of abuse and that safeguards the health and well-being of all members.

In accordance with this policy, St. Joseph Congregation will not condone nor tolerate towards anyone, any of the following:

- ◆ physical or mental abuse
- ◆ racial insults

- ◆ derogatory ethnic slurs
- ◆ sexual comments or sexual jokes
- ◆ any unwanted sexual advances or touching
- ◆ any display or demonstration of sexual activity
- ◆ use of the St. Joseph name, related activities, publications and/or facilities as vehicles for public or private promotion of sexual orientation and/or practice
- ◆ infliction of sexually abusive behavior upon anyone, including touching and bodily contact, exhibitionism, voyeurism, and/or involvement of anyone in pornographic activities or materials
- ◆ physical neglect of anyone, including failure to provide adequate safety measures, care and supervision in relation to St. Joseph activities
- ◆ emotional maltreatment including verbal abuse and/or verbal attacks

In accordance with the guidelines on sexual discrimination issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, St. Joseph Congregation endorses the following:

- ◆ Harassment is a form of misconduct that undermines the integrity of the relationship or presents behavior incompatible with the values, traditions, and purposes of St. Joseph and the Catholic Tradition.
- ◆ Harassment can occur as a result of a single incident or a pattern of behavior where the purpose or effect is to create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating environment.

POLICIES AND APPLICATIONS

Screening of Volunteers

St. Joseph will require all volunteers who work with children and youth to complete three elements in accordance with the archdiocesan guidelines.

- ◆ Complete a Safe Environment training course
- ◆ Read and acknowledge the Code of Ethical Standards
- ◆ Authorize and 'pass' a background check every five years

All of these requirements are preformed and monitored online through Catholic Mutual and their partnership with In2Vate.

The "Six Month Rule"

Adults are eligible to work with children or youth of the parish after having been

members of the parish for at least six months. This policy can be waived by the Pastor. Provision can be made for non-parishioners working in a parish program as long as the intent of this rule is satisfied in their own parish.

The “Two Adult Rule”

Gatherings of several children, such as classes, social activities, and the like, require supervision by at least two persons 18 years of age or older. If a class has only one supervisor, the activity must be visible through an open door. In other cases, the activity must be cancelled if the Two Adult Rule cannot be fulfilled.

Windows and Open Doors

To ensure a safe environment on our premises for both children and adults we the members of St. Joseph require that these policies be enforced. All classrooms, meeting rooms, offices or counseling areas are to have:

- ◆ a door with a window that allows anyone outside the room to observe inside the room without having to open the door or
- ◆ the door will remain open to any room where there isn't a window that will allow observation. These rooms will be posted with a sign that mandates the doors be left open.

Planned Supervision

All elements of the program or outing offered by St. Joseph should be carefully reviewed to ensure that children are supervised before and after the event, until children are returned to their parents or are off the premises.

Overnight Rule

All adults who stay overnight with children must have been screened and must have been members of the parish for at least six months. The adult to student ratio must be at least 1:8, with a minimum of 2 adults present at all times. If the required number of screened adults is not available the event will be cancelled or terminated if already begun.

Parental Permission

Volunteers and Staff must have parental permission to be alone with a minor, such as:

- ◆ To give a car ride
- ◆ To counsel (If the minor does not want the parent to know about counseling, another adult must be present or within sight.)

Permission can be verbal (phone) and/or written. Whenever permission is given verbally it must be witnessed by another adult. Volunteers and Staff must notify their supervisor in advance if he/she is to meet with a minor without another adult present.

Minors Volunteering in the Parish

Minors who are doing a volunteer activity for the parish or are fulfilling community service work must be visible when performing these tasks. Minors are to be under the

supervision of at least two adults and work only when the adults are on the property. Workers will be told the location of their supervisors. Supervisors on the premises will be informed that minors are working and that they should “check in” with the minors.

Counseling Behaviors

Private counseling and pastoral care present a difficult dilemma to balance confidentiality and protection for both parties. Deacons and Priests are obliged to abide by the 1994 ethics policies from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee as published in *The Code of Ethical Standards for Priests, Deacons, and Pastoral Ministers*. Pastoral Team members and others engaged in regular private meetings in the name of St. Joseph are expected to abide by the spirit of the applicable Archdiocesan policies, as well as these parish policies.

The meeting site must be in a room that non-participants have visual access to, e.g., an office with a window or open door. The meeting must be scheduled at a time when it is likely that others will be on the premises.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

Involving Children

The Parish of St. Joseph is morally obligated to take action in cases of suspected abuse or neglect of children. Any person in a paid or volunteer position with the Church who has reason to suspect that a child has been or will be abused or neglected is expected to report the suspicion to the Pastor or his appointed representative, who will then assess the situation and when appropriate report the incident to the County Department of Human Services/Social Services (DHS/DSS). If unable to contact DHS/DSS, contact will be made with the local law enforcement agency.

HOW TO REPORT

When an adult suspects or is made aware of child abuse, contact needs to be made with the Pastor. Together the pastor, or an appointed representative, and the reporting adult will contact the county human services/social services department, sheriff or city police department immediately by phone or in person.

WHAT TO REPORT

All reports of child abuse are kept confidential. You have the right to report anonymously if you choose to do so. As well as you can, explain what happened or is happening to the child. What is the nature of the abuse or neglect? Be as specific as possible. Tell all you know about the situation. Be prepared to give the name, address and phone number of the child and also the name of the parent or caretaker if different.

Physical Abuse

- Physical injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means.
- Physical injury includes but is not limited to lacerations, fractured bones, burns, internal injuries, severe or frequent bruising or great bodily harm.

Sexual Abuse

- Sexual intercourse or sexual contact, sexual exploitation or permitting, allowing or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution.

Emotional Abuse

- Harm to a child's psychological or intellectual functioning which is exhibited by severe anxiety, depression or aggression and is caused by the child's parent, guardian or caretaker. Emotional damage may be demonstrated by observable changes in behavior, emotional response or learning which are incompatible with the child's age or stage of development.

Neglect

- A neglected child is defined as one whose parent or caretaker fails, refuses or is unable for reasons other than poverty, to provide the necessary care so as to seriously endanger the physical health of a child.

Involving Adults

Any adult who feels they have been abused or harassed may contact the Pastor or his appointed representative for confidential disclosure of any complaint. These persons will work out a strategy for further action. Should this action result in a conflict of interest, the offended person should contact the appropriate agency of the Archdiocese.

Involving Incidents Unrelated to Parish

St. Joseph welcomes and assists victims of abuse, by inviting them to come forward to share their story in confidence. We pledge to work with each victim by seeking professional counsel from appropriate civil or church agencies.