

# DIOCESE OF JOLIET STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR FOR THOSE WORKING WITH MINORS

June 1, 2003

There will be clear and well-publicized diocesan standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for clergy and for any other church personnel in positions of trust who have regular contact with children and young people (USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Article 6*).

To foster and maintain an atmosphere of trust and safety in its ministry to minors, the Diocese of Joliet has established *Standards of Behavior for Those Working with Minors*. The Diocese expects all Church personnel to maintain high standards of professional, ministerial and moral behavior.

## **A. Definitions**

1. A minor is defined as anyone under the age of 18. For the purposes of these standards, the term "minors" also includes adults who would be considered vulnerable to abuse because of physical or mental disabilities.
2. Physical abuse is non-accidental injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a minor.
3. Sexual abuse is any contact of a sexual nature that occurs between a minor and an adult. This includes any activity that is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult. Abuse of minors is contrary to the teachings of the Church and is never permissible. Church personnel have a responsibility to actively protect minors from all forms of abuse.
4. Church personnel are any persons, lay, religious or clergy, who are employed by or who volunteer for a diocesan agency, a parish or an educational facility.

## **B. General Guidelines**

The following guidelines are intended to assist Church personnel in making decisions about interactions with minors in Church sponsored and affiliated programs. They do not supersede state law or DCFS requirements. For clarification of these guidelines or for guidance for behaviors not addressed here, contact an immediate supervisor or consult *Faith Formation in the Diocese of Joliet* (Religious Education Office) or the *Personnel Policy Handbook* (Catholic Schools Office).

1. Ministry to minors respects the rights of parents to educate and form their children in faith. Therefore, activities with minors are to be conducted with the explicit knowledge and consent of parents or legal guardians.
2. Church personnel are responsible for releasing minors in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities. In the event that Church personnel are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a minor, they are to contact the parent or legal guardian of the minor. Otherwise, they are to contact their supervisor before releasing the child.
3. Church personnel are never to leave minors unattended at the end of a class, session, event, etc.
4. Church personnel are to report uncontrollable or highly unusual behavior of minors to parents as soon as possible.

5. Church personnel are prohibited from the use, possession or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while working with minors. They are also prohibited from furnishing alcohol or illegal drugs to minors or permitting minors to use such in their presence.
6. Church personnel may occasionally provide transportation for minors. The following guidelines should be observed when Church personnel are involved in the transportation of minors:
  - a. Minors are never to be transported without written permission.
  - b. Minors are to be transported directly to their destination. No unauthorized stops are to be made.
  - c. Church personnel are to avoid unnecessary and/or inappropriate contact with minors while in vehicles.
7. Church personnel are prohibited from speaking to minors in a way that is abusive or demeaning. All are to refrain from using inappropriate language/humor in the presence of minors.
8. Church personnel are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with minors. However, it is expected that classes may address human sexuality issues. These classes will convey the Church's views on the topics. If minors have other questions not answered or addressed by individual teachers, they should be referred to their parents or guardians. Church personnel are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with minors.
9. Church personnel are never to be nude in the presence of minors. Changing and showering facilities for adults are to be separate from those for minors.
10. Church personnel are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented or morally inappropriate materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) or accessing similar materials on the Internet on Church property or in the presence of minors.
11. Church personnel are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds, sleeping bags or small tents with minors.
12. Houses used as residences for priests and religious are exclusively for their use. Minors should not be allowed in the private quarters of those residences. With the exception of occasional visits from immediate family members, minors are not permitted to be overnight guests in the residences of priests or religious.
13. Counseling areas should have transparent windows or open doors. Care should be made to have another adult in the general vicinity during counseling sessions.

### **C. Physical Contact**

The Diocese of Joliet has implemented a physical contact policy that will promote a positive, nurturing, safe environment for children and youth ministries while protecting both children and Church personnel from misunderstandings. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Church personnel working with children and in youth programs.

Church personnel are prohibited from using physical discipline for behavior management of minors. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behavior by minors.

Appropriate affection between Church personnel and minors is important for a child's development. It is a positive part of Church life and ministry and should be given in public but not in isolated or secluded areas.

1. The following forms of affection are regarded as some appropriate examples for most Church sponsored and affiliated programs:
  - Side hugs.
  - Shoulder to shoulder hugs.
  - Pats on the shoulder or back.
  - Handshakes.
  - “High-fives” and hand slapping.
  - Verbal praise.
  - Touching hands, faces, shoulders or arms of minors.
  - Arms around shoulders.
  - Holding hands while walking with small children.
  - Sitting beside small children.
  - Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children.
  - Holding hands during prayer.
  - Pats on the head when culturally appropriate. (Avoid in some Asian communities.)
  - Reciprocation of appropriate gestures initiated by a minor.
2. Some forms of physical affection have been used to initiate inappropriate contact with minors. In order to maintain the safest possible environment for minors, the following are examples of affection that are not to be used in Church sponsored and affiliated programs:
  - Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
  - Kisses on the mouth.
  - Holding minors over five/six years old on the lap.
  - Touching buttocks, chests or genital areas.
  - Sleeping in a bed, sleeping bag or small tent with a minor.
  - Touching the knees or legs of minors.
  - Tickling minors.
  - Wrestling and/or roughhousing.
  - Piggyback rides.
  - Any type of massage given by a minor to an adult.
  - Any type of massage given by an adult to a minor.
  - Any form of unwanted affection.
  - Compliments that relate to physique or body development.

#### **D. Undue Attention**

Certain conduct has been used by adults to develop inappropriate relationships with minors. Activities include singling out minors or showing them unusual attention. Some examples of this behavior prohibited for Church personnel are:

- Presenting gifts to a minor that would not ordinarily be given to an entire group of children, excluding awards, etc.
- Allowing a minor to drive automobiles of Church personnel even though another adult may be present.
- Singling out a particular child for special dinners, events, trips or outings.

#### **E. Screening**

1. All applicants for Church personnel positions working with minors will be required to complete the following without exception:
  - a. A standard application that includes a release of information to conduct background checks. Applicants will also be required to read and sign the *Standards of Behavior for Those Working with Minors*.
  - b. Appropriate criminal records check.

2. For employees and volunteers who have worked in the parish or school for two years or more, the application and criminal records check will complete their screening process.
3. Additional screening procedures, such as reference checks and face-to-face interviews are recommended for new applicants.
4. Volunteers for programs working with minors in parishes should be registered members of the parish for at least six months before being placed in a volunteer position with minors. With care, exceptions may be made for parents of minors who can demonstrate evidence of satisfactory ministry with minors from a previous parish.

#### **F. Program Supervision**

1. Parents are encouraged to be a part of services and programs in which their children are involved in the Diocese of Joliet. If parents wish to observe programs/activities in which their children are involved, they may do so after making arrangements with the principal or program administrator.
2. Special care needs to be taken where a program is sponsored or administered by only one adult or by anyone under age 21.
3. Church personnel in leadership roles must be aware of all programs for minors that are sponsored by a parish or school.
4. Individual Church personnel are not permitted to implement new programs for minors without receiving approval from the appropriate administrator (school, religious education, parish).

#### **G. Reporting Violations**

All Church personnel are required to report violations of the *Standards of Behavior for Those Working with Minors* by an adult employee or volunteer to that individual's immediate supervisor.

Certain personnel (including priests, school and child care personnel, medical personnel, social workers, psychologists, professional counselors, and recreational program personnel) are considered mandated reporters under Illinois law and must report to DCFS any situation in which they have a reasonable belief that a child is being physically or sexually abused.

#### **H. Education, Distribution and Acknowledgement**

Members of the clergy, religious, employees and all volunteers who work with minors will be required to receive inservice education that addresses their role in protecting minors.

Minors who serve as employees or volunteers will be informed that they have a right to a safe working environment and a right to disclose behavior not in accord with these standards.

The *Standards of Behavior for Those Working with Minors* is to be given to all diocesan and parish employees and volunteers, as well as to all parents and parishioners whose children attend parochial schools or attend Religious Education. The document is posted on the Diocesan website: [www.dioceseofjoliet.org](http://www.dioceseofjoliet.org)

All Church personnel are required to comply with the *Standards of Behavior for Those Working with Minors*.