

**The Diocese of Cleveland**

# **Standards of Conduct For Ministry**

**Revised 2016**



**Promulgated 15 June 2016**

**Effective 31 December 2016**



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The dignity of each member of our Church calls us to maintain the highest levels of compassion and respect as we fulfill our mission. As disciples of Jesus and trusted leaders within the Church community, your contribution to this mission is essential as you carry out your service to others.

For our diocese, these norms and guidelines have been expressed formally in the *Standards of Conduct For Ministry* since 2005. These Standards of Conduct are an important tool for maintaining such professionalism in all that we do. The promulgation of these Standards obliges all of us to a renewed consciousness of the need to protect each person's dignity. And for those who are new to positions of service within the Diocese of Cleveland, these Standards continue to introduce a clear understanding of those expectations for everyone affiliated with the work of our diocese.

Therefore, it is important that we regularly exam and, as needed, update the norms and guidelines governing our work so that we may ensure that our mission to serve is done in a healthy and life-giving manner.

As with any aspect of formation for ministry, these *Standards of Conduct* require reflection, instruction, and discussion. Because there are some new features to these Standards, diocesan staff members are providing opportunities for all members of our diocesan community to be made aware of the new content and are also available to answer any questions or concerns which may arise. I also encourage leaders of our various programs to use these *Standards* as a basis for ongoing renewal and formation.

I thank you for your generous cooperation in promoting these *Standards* in your life and place of ministry.

After appropriate consultation, by this Decree, I formally adopt these *Standards of Conduct for Ministry (revised 2016)*. These *Standards* will take the place of the *Standards of Conduct for Ministry* promulgated in 2005. This decree is published by my authority as Bishop of Cleveland and is to apply to all Priests, Deacons, Lay Ecclesial Ministers, Administrators, Staff and Volunteers of the Diocese of Cleveland, its parishes and other Catholic Institutions within the Diocese.

The Decree will take effect on 31 December 2016.

  
Bishop of Cleveland

  
Chancellor



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# I. INTRODUCTION

*This is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God.*<sup>1</sup>

Standards of conduct are guidelines and norms derived from basic principles and values setting forth specific conduct expected of an individual in specific situations. Guidelines allow for discretion on the part of an individual, while norms are mandatory statements of what one must do in a certain situation.

**Guidelines** are statements to guide an individual in his or her actions and are not binding as are norms, allowing for particular situations in which the exercise of reasonable discretion may call for limited exceptions. Guidelines indicate objectives toward which an individual should strive, or conduct that individuals should ordinarily follow, recognizing that there may be exceptional circumstances. In this document, guidelines are indicated by the use of the word “**should**” or “**should not.**”

**Norms** indicate a mandatory statement that must be followed by individuals. Norms indicate a level of conduct below which no individual can fall. In this document, norms are indicated by the words or phrases “**shall,**” “**shall not,**” “**must,**” and “**must not.**”

Before each section of *Standards of Conduct*, there is text in *italics* which is a statement of the scope of application and provides guiding principles or definitions. The italicized text is not a standard of conduct but is explanatory only.

Responsibility for adherence to the *Standards of Conduct* for Ministry rests primarily with the individual. Clergy, staff, and volunteers who disregard the following *Standards of Conduct* may be subject to disciplinary action by the entity within the Diocese that employs, supervises, or authorizes their ministry or employment, whether it be the diocesan bishop, a pastor, a principal, the executive director of a corporation, or other appropriate person within the Church structure. Corrective action may take various forms – from a verbal reprimand to removal from employment of the ministry – depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm.

This document, unless otherwise stated, applies to clergy, volunteers and all other Church personnel in positions of trust.

***These Standards of Conduct are to supplement and complement the diocesan Policy for the Safety of Children in Matters of Sexual Abuse: Revised, 2007. Church Personnel are to follow both the Standards of Conduct and the Policy for the Safety of Children in Matters of Sexual Abuse: Revised, 2007, as revised, amended or restated from time to time.***<sup>2</sup>

The *Standards of Conduct* also meets the standard required by article 6 of the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* that all clergy and any other Church personnel in positions of trust who have regular contact with children affirm a code of ethics and conduct.

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<sup>1</sup> Micah 6:8

<sup>2</sup> The diocesan *Policy for the Safety of Children in Matters of Sexual Abuse* was promulgated in 2003, restated in 2007 as the *Policy for the Safety of Children in Matters of Sexual Abuse: Revised, 2007* and again as the *Policy for the Safety of Children in Matters of Sexual Abuse: Revised 2016*. References to that *Policy* in these *Standards of Conduct* include the *Policy* as restated, revised or amended from time to time, and should always be interpreted as referring to the *Policy* as most recently promulgated.

## Scope

Parts of this document apply to diocesan personnel, including clergy (priests and deacons), all other Church personnel (seminarian, candidates for ministry, religious, certified pastoral minister, parish life coordinator, diocesan or parish employee or any person appointed by the Bishop) and volunteers in positions of trust who have regular contact with children. Other parts of this document may apply only to a certain part of this group.

As an introduction to each section of this document, a statement will indicate the scope of the section, i.e., to whom it applies.

## Codes of Ethics

These *Standards of Conduct* are intended to comply with article 6 of the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. These standards are a set of minimum expectations and do not prevent any group of professional ministers within the Diocese of Cleveland from developing a code of ethics for its own use, provided the group obtains appropriate approvals, the code developed does not contradict anything in this document, and the code developed does not replace or supersede this document or seek to do so.

## Definitions

**Clergy (Clerics)** are ordained priests and ordained deacons (including both transitional and permanent deacons) who are incardinated in the Diocese of Cleveland, as well as priests and deacons incardinated in other dioceses *or* religious orders who are engaged in ministry under the control or auspices of the Diocese.

**Church Personnel** are Clergy (as defined above), brothers, seminarians, religious, certified pastoral ministers, parish life coordinators, members of a pastoral team, principals, teachers, diocesan or parish employees, employees of a corporation within the juridic person of the diocese, or any persons appointed by the Bishop.

**Entity** means any parish, institution, organization, corporation, office, department, program or other juridic collective under the auspices of the Diocese of Cleveland.

A **Volunteer** is a person who gives his services to the Diocese, a parish or other entity affiliated with the Diocese without any express or implied promise of remuneration. Volunteers who work with children are subject to the obligations of the *Policy for the Safety of Children*, which are not to be construed as inconsistent with any policies herein.<sup>3</sup>

**Seminarian** includes any student sponsored by the Diocese of Cleveland and participating in any of the various programs of priestly formation.

**Candidate for Ministry** includes anyone formally participating in any of the various formation or training programs for ministry, including seminarians, aspirants and candidates for the diaconate, and those in the pastoral ministry program.

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<sup>3</sup> Under this policy a volunteer is anyone who works with children more than four (4) hours a month or who works with children more frequently than once a month. Examples include, but are not limited to, a catechist, coach, altar server coordinator, youth leader, intern, student teacher and others in similar capacities. It does not include the occasional volunteer, such as solely a driver or chaperone for individual activities.



**Minor** means any person who is under eighteen (18) years of age, is a physically or handicapped person under twenty-one (21) years of age, and a person of *any age* who habitually lacks the use of reason.

**Boundaries** mark off the physical, spiritual, and psychological space which is the private preserve of a person upon which there should be no intrusion.

**Conflicts of interest** occur when individuals take advantage of a ministerial position or relationship to further their own personal, political, or financial interests. Conflicts of interest also arise when church personnel's independent judgment is impaired by:

- a. prior dealings;
- b. becoming personally involved; or
- c. becoming an advocate for one (person) against another.

**Confidentiality** is a legally enforced expectation that a statement is private since it was made under circumstances showing that the speaker intended the statement only for the individual addressed. One of the circumstances leading to a determination of confidentiality may be the relationship between the speaker and the listener; another is the absence of other persons.

**Professional Counseling** refers to services provided by a licensed professional for assistance in dealing with personal problems that can include behavioral, job, marriage, and school, rehabilitative or emotional issues. A counselor is a licensed professional who utilizes the skills of active listening, empathy, reflection, educating, and problem solving. Some counselors administer and interpret psychological tests to assist with the counseling process. Psychotherapy is a general term referring to therapeutic interaction or treatment contracted between a trained professional and a client. The problems addressed are psychological in nature and can vary in terms of the causes, influences, triggers, and potential resolutions.

**Pastoral Counseling** refers to those caring acts of the Church under the guidance of a minister who addresses issues of care from the perspective of both Christian theology and the modern sciences, especially psychology. While not necessarily accompanying licensure or certification, pastoral counseling requires basic training and preparation.

**Spiritual direction** refers to services provided by a trained spiritual director and is directly concerned with a person's actual experiences of his or her relationship with God.

**Counselors**, as used in this document, refer to a broad range of trained individuals who provide pastoral counseling, mental health counseling, school counseling, family and marriage counseling, vocational counseling and spiritual direction.

## II. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

### A. Standards of Conduct Relating to Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction

*Scope: Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors: Church personnel and volunteers who provide pastoral, spiritual, and/or therapeutic counseling services to individuals, families, or other groups.*

*Guiding Principle: Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors and others who fall within the scope of these Standards of Conduct should respect the rights and advance the welfare of each person whom they Counsel.*

Those who provide Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction:

1. should not step beyond their competence in counseling situations and should refer clients to other professionals when appropriate;
2. should avoid whenever possible entering into a counseling relationship with someone with whom they have a pre-existing relationship (i.e., employee, professional colleague, friend, or other pre-existing relationship). When unavoidable, counseling should be preceded by an open discussion of the relationship and, if warranted, an appropriate written disclosure should be made with written consent by the counselee;
3. should not make audio- or video-recordings of sessions;
4. must never engage in sexual intimacies with the persons they counsel; this includes consensual and nonconsensual contact, forced physical contact, and inappropriate sexual comments;
5. must 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; they should presume that the potential for exploitation or harm exists in such intimate relationships;
6. should assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all counseling and counseling-related relationships;
7. should avoid physical contact of any kind (i.e., touching, hugging, holding);
8. should conduct sessions in appropriate settings at appropriate times;
  - a. should not conduct sessions in private living quarters; those who are clerics must not conduct sessions in private living quarters or areas;
  - b. should not hold sessions at places or times that would tend to cause confusion about the nature of the relationship for the person being counseled;
9. should maintain a log of the times and places of sessions with each person being counseled (this log should be retained by the counselor).

## **B. Conflicts of Interest**

*Scope: These standards apply to Church personnel and volunteers in positions of trust.*

*Guiding Principle: Church personnel and volunteers should avoid situations that might present a conflict of interest. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call integrity, professionalism, and ministerial conduct into question.*

1. Church personnel and volunteers should disclose to the individual all relevant factors that potentially could create a conflict of interest.
2. Church personnel and volunteers should inform all parties when a real or potential conflict of interest arises. Resolution of the issues must protect the person receiving ministry services.
  - a. Church personnel and volunteers should never take advantage of anyone to whom they are providing services in order to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.
  - b. Church personnel and volunteers should not provide a counseling service to anyone with whom they have a business, professional, or social relationship. When this is unavoidable, the client must be protected. The counselor must establish and maintain clear, appropriate boundaries.

- c. When pastoral counseling or spiritual direction services are provided to two or more people who have a relationship with each other, the pastoral counselor or spiritual director
  - i. must clarify with all parties the nature of each relationship;
  - ii. should anticipate any conflict of interest;
  - iii. if a conflict of interest arises, must take appropriate actions to eliminate the conflict; and
  - iv. should obtain from all parties written consent to continue services.
- d. When a conflict of interest has arisen and cannot be reconciled, Church personnel should advise the parties that he or she can no longer provide services and make a referral for continued ministry.

### **C. Confidentiality**

*Scope: The following standards apply to Pastoral Counselors, Spiritual Directors, and other church personnel and volunteers who provide services to individuals, families, or other groups (hereinafter “counselors”).*

*All Church personnel are expected to maintain confidentiality within the scope of their duties and as delineated in any job descriptions and employee practices.*

*The following 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 celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.*

*Guiding Principle: Information disclosed in ministerial settings during the course of counseling, advising, or spiritual direction shall be held in the strictest confidence possible.*

1. At the commencement of the counseling relationship, the counselor should discuss the nature of confidentiality and disclose its limitations with each person in counseling and obtain a signed acknowledgement of the disclosure.
2. Information obtained in the course of sessions should be confidential, except for compelling professional reasons or as required by law.
  - a. If there is clear and imminent danger to the person being counseled or to others, the counselor should disclose sufficient information necessary to protect the parties potentially affected and to prevent harm.
  - b. Before disclosure is made, if feasible, the counselor should inform the person being counseled about the disclosure and the potential consequences.
3. The counselor should keep minimal records of the content of sessions. This may include, but is not limited to, dates and times of appointments, general summary of content in order to assist counselor with personal recall, and other pertinent information in order to assist the individual receiving counseling.
4. While counseling a minor, the counselor may discover a serious threat to the welfare of the minor. If communication of confidential information to a parent, legal guardian, children’s services agency or law enforcement is essential to the child’s health and well-being, the counselor should:

- a. Attempt to secure written consent from the minor for the specific disclosure.
  - b. If consent is not given, the counselor should disclose sufficient information necessary to protect the health and well-being of the minor. Consultation with the appropriate church supervisory personnel is required before disclosure, but is not to delay the disclosure.
5. In some circumstances, a legal privilege that applies to confidential communication may seem to prevent a counselor from disclosing misconduct by a counselee, but a counselor must take care to follow the legal requirements for reporting and the diocesan *Policy for the Safety of Children*.

#### **D. Conduct With Youth**

*Scope: These standards apply to Church personnel and volunteers in positions of trust who have regular contact with minors.*

*Guiding principle: Church personnel and volunteers working with youth shall maintain a relationship with the youth with whom they are working that is open and transparent to co-workers and supervisors, and is worthy of the trust placed in the Church personnel and volunteers.*

1. Church personnel and volunteers must be aware of their own and others' vulnerability when working alone with youth. They should use a team approach to managing youth activities.
2. Church personnel and volunteers should not meet with a minor alone in a separate room unless there is a window on the door, or the door is open, except in the case of a sacramental confession within a church building.
3. Church personnel and volunteers should be committed to a lifestyle that serves as an example of chastity at all times.
4. Physical contact with youth can be misconstrued and:
  - a. Shall occur only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and
  - b. Should never occur in private.
  - c. Church personnel and volunteers should avoid using inappropriate expressions of physical affection with minors, including but not limited to: Close or lengthy embraces; kisses on the mouth; holding minors over two years of age on the lap; touching bottoms, chests or genital areas; sleeping in bed with a minor; wrestling with minors; piggyback rides; any type of massage given to or received from a minor; any form of unwanted affection; **or** compliments that relate to physique or body development.
5. Church personnel and volunteers should refrain from the use of alcohol, tobacco and other materials or substances which minors cannot legally purchase, use or possess when working with youth, and they must not share with, or allow the use of materials or substances by minors which minors cannot legally purchase, use or possess.
6. Staff and volunteers 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.
7. All youth trips, especially overnight ones, should have a sufficient number of adult chaperones over the age of 21 present. **A** member of the clergy, a volunteer, or any Church personnel should never be sole chaperone for any trip or activity. When staying overnight with minors, no clergy, Church

personnel or volunteers should sleep in the same bed, sleeping bag, small tent, or bedroom with minors.

8. Church personnel and volunteers should never accompany minors to movies, sporting events or other forms of entertainment without at least one other adult chaperone over the age of 21 being present.
9. Church personnel and volunteers should never be present in locker rooms or other dressing rooms used by minors without another adult over the age of 21 being present. They should not linger or hang around or spend long periods in locker rooms or other dressing rooms.
10. Church personnel and volunteers should not give expensive gifts or gifts of a personal nature to minors nor accept expensive gifts or gifts of a personal nature from minors without prior express permission of the minor's parents or legal guardians.
11. Church personnel and volunteers should never obtain or possess sexually explicit or pornographic materials, and must not participate in the distribution or receipt of pornographic materials through any medium or share these materials in any way with minors. Clergy, Church personnel and volunteers must never possess or access child pornography through any medium.
12. Church personnel and volunteers should avoid taking unfair advantage of counseling relationships with minors for personal benefit or gratification.
13. Church personnel and volunteers should not give rides in motor vehicles to minors unless another adult is present and the permission of the minor's parent or legal guardian is granted.

## **E. Sexual Conduct**

*Scope: These Standards of Conduct apply to all Church personnel and volunteers.*

*Guiding Principle: Church personnel and volunteers must not, for sexual gain or intimacy, exploit the trust placed in them by the faith community.*

1. Since all are called by Baptism to the virtue of chastity, Church personnel and volunteers who are committed to a chaste lifestyle should be an example of chastity in all relationships at all times.
2. Church personnel and volunteers who provide pastoral counseling or spiritual direction shall not develop inappropriate intimate relationships with minors, other staff and parishioners and should behave in a professional manner at all times.
3. No Church personnel or volunteer shall exploit another person for sexual purposes.
4. Suspected sexual misconduct must be taken seriously and reported to the appropriate person in the parish, community/institute, diocese, or organization and also to civil authorities and the diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator if the situation involves a minor, following the *Policy for the Safety of Children*. The procedures of this policy shall be followed to protect the rights of all involved.
5. Church personnel and volunteers should review and know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the State of Ohio and should follow those mandates. Information on the reporting obligation and offices to whom reports are to be made can be found in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 of the *Policy for Safety of Children*; Article 2 of the policy also delineates the obligation to report. This policy can be found on the Diocese of Cleveland website under Diocesan Initiatives, then Child Protection, then Office for Protection of Youth and Children and then Documents and Policies.

## F. Harassment

*Scope: These standards apply to all Church personnel and volunteers.*

*Guiding Principle: Church personnel and volunteers must not engage in physical, psychological, written, or verbal harassment of other Church personnel, volunteers, parishioners or others, and must not tolerate such harassment by other Church personnel or volunteers.*

1. “Harassment” encompasses a broad range of physical, written, or verbal behavior, including without limitation the following:
  - a. Physical or mental abuse;
  - b. Racial insults;
  - c. Derogatory ethnic slurs;
  - d. Unwelcome sexual advances or touching;
  - e. Sexual comments or sexual jokes;
  - f. Display of offensive materials;
  - g. Requests for sexual favors used as a condition of employment, or to effect other personnel decisions, such as promotion or compensation.
2. The concept of “harassment” can include the concept of “bullying” and the two overlap. It is not the intention of the *Standards of Conduct* to exclude actions regarded as “bullying” by using the word “harassment;” bullying involves harassment.
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.
  - a. Church personnel and volunteers should provide and/or contribute to a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment.
  - b. Church personnel and volunteers must never intentionally post on their personal social networking site or to any social networking site materials that are false, derogatory, defamatory, degrading, malicious, disrespectful, or threatening to anyone. (See Section K below.)
  - c. Allegations of harassment should be taken seriously and reported immediately to the appropriate person in the parish, community/institute, diocese, or organization. The policy and procedures of the diocese, parish, community/institute or organization, as appropriate, will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.

## G. Organizational Records and Information

*Scope: These standards apply only to pastors, administrators, parish life coordinators, and any other persons who may be in charge of a parish, parochial vicars, parish staff and any others who may have charge of or access to sacramental records.*

*Guiding Principle: Confidentiality should be maintained in creating, storing, accessing, transferring and disposing of parish, religious community/institute, or organizational records.*

1. Sacramental records shall be regarded as confidential. When compiling and publishing parish, religious community/institute, or organization statistical information from these records, great care must be taken to preserve the anonymity of the individuals.

2. Sacramental records are not open to the public.
  - a. Information regarding adoption and legitimacy remains confidential, regardless of age of the document.
  - b. Only staff members who are authorized to access the records and supervise their use should handle requests for more recent records.
3. A parish or other entity's financial records are confidential unless review is required by the diocese or an appropriate government agency. Individuals in charge of diocesan, parish, or church-related corporate financial records should contact the Diocesan Legal Office with regard to any request for their release or disclosure.
4. Individual contribution records of the parish, religious community/institute, or organization should be regarded as private and should be maintained in strictest confidence.

## **H. Reporting Ethical or Professional Misconduct**

*Scope: These standards apply to Church personnel and volunteers.*

*Guiding Principle: Church personnel and volunteers should report their own ethical or professional misconduct and the misconduct of others and must report sexual abuse of minors in accord with the Policy for Safety of Children and state or local laws.*

1. When an uncertainty exists about whether a situation or course of conduct violates this document or other religious, moral, or ethical principles, Church personnel and volunteers should consult with:
  - a. peers,
  - b. others knowledgeable about moral or ethical issues, or
  - c. the Chancery office.
2. When it appears that a member of the clergy, Church personnel, or a volunteer has violated one or more of these *Standards of Conduct*, the matter should be reported to the individual's supervisor or next higher authority.
3. If it is a matter of sexual abuse of a minor, reporting shall be done to the appropriate legal authority and to the Victim Assistance Coordinator, according to the *Policy for the Safety of Children*.
4. Members of the clergy, Church personnel and volunteers should hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards.

## **I. Administration**

*Scope: These standards apply to Church personnel who are employers and supervisors.*

*Guiding Principle: Employers and supervisors shall treat justly Church personnel and volunteers in the day-to-day administrative operations of their ministries.*

1. Personnel and other administrative decisions made by church personnel shall meet civil **law** and canon law obligations and also should reflect Catholic social teachings and these *Standards of Conduct*.

2. No employer or supervisor should use his or her position to exercise unreasonable or inappropriate power, authority or domination.

## **J. Well-Being of Church Personnel and Volunteers**

*Scope: These standards apply to Church personnel and volunteers.*

*Guiding Principle: Church personnel and volunteers should be responsible for their own spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional health.*

1. Church personnel and volunteers should be aware of warning signs that indicate potential problems with their own spiritual, physical, mental, and/or emotional health.
2. Church personnel and volunteers should seek help immediately whenever they notice behavioral or emotional warning signs in their own professional and/or personal lives.
3. Church personnel and volunteers should not engage in inappropriate use of alcohol and drugs and must not engage in illegal use of alcohol and/or drugs.
4. Church personnel and volunteers should address their own spiritual needs.
5. Those in serving in roles of leadership should always maintain an interest in the well-being of all Church personnel and volunteers.

## **K. Use of Social Media and All Forms of Electronic Communication**

*Scope: These standards apply to all Church personnel and volunteers.*

*Guiding Principle: Personnel, employed or as volunteers, who use the various forms of social media, e-mail, or the Internet should use these forms of communication for appropriate ministry and not to develop personal relationships with those whom they serve, especially minors.*

1. Meaning of “Social Media”
  - a. “Social media,” for purposes of this document, refers to Internet, network, and mobile-based tools for sharing information and communicating in interactive dialogue. Social media is a constantly developing field which currently includes but is not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, MySpace, LinkedIn, blogs, Yelp, Foursquare, Flickr, Instagram, texting, and various mobile device “apps.”
  - b. Because technology is constantly evolving, the ethical principles in these *Standards of Conduct* apply to new forms of communication developed after the issuance of these standards. A change in technology does not exempt Church personnel or volunteers from diocesan principles and standards.
2. No Privacy in Electronic Communications
  - a. Electronic mail, social media, or Internet communications, and Internet browsing in a school, parish or other diocesan entity are not private. Such communications and Internet use in the course of ministry or with persons served in ministry, that are made using the Internet service, hardware or software owned, leased or licensed by any diocesan, parish,



institution or agency of either of the foregoing or any other entity owned or sponsored by the diocese or a parish (hereinafter referred to as “entity”) (with or without permission) are subject to oversight and scrutiny and may be monitored, reviewed or accessed without the knowledge or consent of the sender or recipient.

- b. All computers, cell phones and other digital or electronic devices owned or leased by an entity may be inspected at any time without any advance notice, including such devices assigned to an individual for his exclusive use.
3. Open and Transparent Electronic Communication or Use of Social Media by Church Personnel and Volunteers
    - a. Church Personnel and Volunteers shall discuss with supervisors and pastors their planned use of social media, e-mail communication, or the Internet before applying it to an area of ministry, especially with minors.
    - b. Church personnel and volunteers shall carefully compose appropriate communication, especially communication that is intended for minors, to eliminate any wording that could be interpreted as sexually suggestive and copy an adult who is a ministerial supervisor on the communication so that it is public and verifiable.
    - c. When the director of a ministry determines that communication via electronic, digital or social media is appropriate to ministry, each entity promoting that ministry should provide all Church personnel and appropriate volunteers in the program with individual email addresses and/or other access accounts which indicate the name of the entity and the specific ministerial function. There are two methods for providing email to church personnel and volunteers.

Preferred method – entities should provide email accounts specific to the domain of their parish/institution web site (i.e. [DRE@stgeorge.com](mailto:DRE@stgeorge.com)).

Other method – supervisors could establish a web-based account (i.e., [stgeorgeDRE@gmail.com](mailto:stgeorgeDRE@gmail.com)). The password in this case should be known by the supervisor and the individual church personnel or volunteer.
    - d. Church personnel and volunteers should use these official ministry e-mail addresses or accounts for communications and social media access rather than their personal addresses or access accounts to communicate with persons related to their ministry, especially minors.

#### 4. Supervision of Electronic Communications

- a. A supervisor or other designated person of an entity shall have the ability to access the communications pertaining to work of every church personnel or volunteer. Access should be made available by the system administrator using the system’s administrative functions. The sharing of individual passwords is never recommended to gain access to an account. In the event that an individual’s official email is web-based (i.e. Gmail, Ymail, AOL, etc.), a common password to that account should be known by the individual and the supervisor.
- b. Church personnel and volunteers should not use the entity’s hardware, Internet portal, or software for personal communications not related to the entity.

- c. The use of personal, as opposed to entity or an employer's, social media may be an occasion for disciplinary action, including termination of employment or status as a volunteer, especially if there is violation of the norms in these *Standards of Conduct* in relation to parish or entity activity.
  - d. Evidence of the accessing, storing, or transmitting of pornographic images is cause for immediate disciplinary action, including termination of employment or status as a volunteer.
  - e. Any evidence of criminal activity, such as suspected child pornography, found on an entity computer by any Church Personnel or volunteer shall be reported to law enforcement officials, as well as to the appropriate supervisor.
5. Guides for the Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media
- a. Electronic communication from Church personnel or volunteers should be brief, simple, and clear as to its stated purpose of business.
  - b. Personal remarks other than common courtesies appropriate in the situation, especially when addressing minors, should be avoided. Excessive familiarity or a purely social relationship is not appropriate in ministry; adults in ministry may develop a cordial and supportive relationship with minors, but must refrain from excessive familiarity or friendship with minors.
  - c. When using any form of social media, e-mails, or the Internet, all policies contained in the *Standards of Conduct* apply. This especially applies to rules of confidentiality, conduct with youth, sexual conduct, and harassment. The Church personnel or volunteer should utilize the resources and techniques made available through *Virtus* training.
  - d. Church personnel and volunteers are to see that their own personal social networking site does not contain any material that is pornographic, indecent, or inconsistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church.
  - e. Church personnel and volunteers shall not post on their own social networking sites any image of a minor with whom they are working or have previously worked in a parish or entity. When sharing a photo that includes a minor on the entity's social networking site, written permission shall be obtained from the minor's parent or legal guardian. The identity of any minor should never be included as part of the picture or description.
  - f. Church personnel and volunteers should not examine or patrol social networking sites of the minors with whom they work, monitor minors' behavior on those sites, or seek out a minor's personal site for details of his or her personal life.
6. Administrative Matters
- a. Copyrighted Material. Use of an entity's system or systems for unauthorized copying of copyrighted software or content is expressly prohibited. Moreover, proprietary information belonging to others must not be placed on an entity's system without the prior written approval of the owner. Any Church personnel or volunteer who violates these rules may be disciplined.
  - b. If Church personnel or volunteer receives notice, in writing or otherwise, or becomes aware that an entity's system(s) is being used or is proposed to be used to create, disseminate, store,

upload or download any messages, communications or other material in violation of copyrights, trademarks, patents, intellectual property or other property rights of any party, such Church personnel or volunteer shall inform the entity director or his or her designee in writing of such use or proposed use. The entity may remove or disable access to any material that is claimed to be infringing or to be the subject matter of infringing activity.

- c. The entity may establish a policy or policies to protect information from unauthorized and inappropriate access, publication or modification; such a policy may also supplement, but not contradict these *Standards of Conduct*, to address particular activities, ministries, staff, expertise in technology, system or site, its own hardware and software.
- d. All church personnel and volunteers must adhere to any such policy or policies. Failure to adhere to such policy or policies may be an occasion for disciplinary action, including termination of employment or status as a volunteer.
- e. If Church personnel and volunteers do use these forms of communication to communicate with a minor or minors, then a policy should be issued to parents telling them that such communication is likely to occur.
- f. Any site or system established by an entity must have an adult as the administrator of the system or site; the administrator is to be selected by the director of that entity.
- g. The Office of Communications shall from time to time issue norms and guidelines to provide further guidance for the implementation of this Section of the *Standards of Conduct*. Parishes, schools and other entities within the Diocese of Cleveland are encouraged to contact the Social Media Coordinator within the Office of Communications for Best Practices in creating, monitoring and educating their audiences about social media use.

## **L. Priests**

*Scope: This applies to all ordained priests who are incardinated in the Diocese of Cleveland, as well as priests incardinated in other dioceses or religious orders who are engaged in ministry under the control or auspices of the Diocese of Cleveland.*

*Guiding Principle: Priests should exercise professional caution in all interactions with minors.*

1. Whenever possible, a priest should avoid being alone with a minor, excluding sacramental confession (normally taking place within a church), counseling and spiritual direction (normally occurring in the professional offices of the church or rectory with an open door or a closed door with a window).
2. Minors are permitted only in the public areas of a rectory and never in the private living quarters of a priest. Minors are not permitted in any private residence, cabin, condominium, summer home or other dwelling whether leased or owned by a priest unless the minor is accompanied by his or her parents or guardians.
3. Minors are not permitted to work in rectories or parish offices.
4. Priests should not give alcohol to minors or share alcohol with minors, except for distribution of Holy Communion under both species.

5. Priests who find themselves attracted to minors or who frequently seek their companionship rather than that of adults should seek advice and assistance from the Secretary and Vicar for Clergy and Religious, who may suggest a professional evaluation with a trained psychological expert.
6. Conversations or discussions of a topic of a sexual nature with minors should be limited to the priest's teaching office or made in response to specific questions.
7. Priests should share concerns about suspicious or inappropriate behavior of a cleric or other Church personnel with a minor with the Secretary and Vicar for Clergy and Religious, in addition to following the reporting duties delineated under Ohio law and the *Policy for the Safety of Children*.
8. With regard to minors within a priest's extended family or in cases where priests may have children, priests should follow these *Standards of Conduct* with due discretion, diligence and prudence, adapting those standards which should be adapted because of family relationships.

### **M. Permanent Deacons**

*Scope: This applies to all ordained permanent deacons who are incardinated in the Diocese of Cleveland, as well as permanent deacons incardinated in other dioceses or religious orders who are engaged in ministry under the control or auspices of the Diocese of Cleveland.*

*Guiding Principle: Permanent deacons should exercise professional caution in all interactions with minors.*

Permanent deacons should follow the same *Standards of Conduct* as priests and as clergy, church personnel and volunteers with regard to relationships arising out of ministry. With regard to their own family and their own private dwellings, permanent deacons should follow these *Standards of Conduct* with due discretion, diligence and prudence, adapting those standards which should be adapted because of family relationships.

***Standards of Conduct for Ministry, Revised 2016***  
***Diocese of Cleveland***  
**Acknowledgment Form**

**Diocesan, Religious, and Extern Clerics**

I have received a printed or electronic copy of the *Standards of Conduct for Ministry* (Revised, 2016). I have read and understand these *Standards of Conduct* and I agree to abide by them. I understand that a violation of these standards can result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination and/or removal from ministry.

I participated in the mandatory in-service on the 2016 Revised Policy for the Safety of Children in Matters of Sexual Abuse and the Standards of Conduct on (date) \_\_\_\_\_.

Priest

Diocesan

Extern

Religious \_\_\_\_\_ Congregation

Deacon

Diocesan

Extern

Religious \_\_\_\_\_ Congregation

Parish/Assignment \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**All clerics are to return this acknowledgment form to:**

**Office of the Chancellor**  
**Diocese of Cleveland**  
**1404 East Ninth Street**  
**Cleveland, Ohio 44114-1722**



***Standards of Conduct for Ministry, Revised 2016***  
***Diocese of Cleveland***  
**Acknowledgment Form**

**Employees and Volunteers**

I have received a printed or electronic copy of the *Standards of Conduct for Ministry* (Revised, 2016). I have read and understand these *Standards of Conduct* and I agree to abide by them. I understand that a violation of these standards can result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination as an employee or volunteer and/or removal from ministry.

I participated in the mandatory in-service on the 2016 Revised Policy for the Safety of Children in Matters of Sexual Abuse and the Standards of Conduct on (date) \_\_\_\_\_.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Please print clearly) \_\_\_\_\_

Parish/Assignment \_\_\_\_\_

Position (or volunteer activity) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The signed *Standards of Conduct for Ministry* Acknowledgment Form shall be kept in employee personnel files at the agency/parish/school or in a general volunteer file at the agency/parish/school.