




DIOCESE OF CAMDEN  
*Chancery*

Memo

To: All priests, Deacons, DREs, Religious

From: Reverend Jason T. Rocks, S.T.L., J.C.L.   
Chancellor

Re: Standards of Ministerial Behavior

Date: September 11, 2023

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This is a copy of the revised Diocesan Standards of Ministerial Behavior, which replaces the current edition from 2013.

All priests, deacons and religious brothers and sisters ministering within the Diocese of Camden are to read and sign this document.

Pastors, please be sure that all persons who assist in a ministerial capacity (deacons, pastoral associates, Religious Sisters, DREs, youth ministers, music ministry, etc.) read and sign this document.

All the signed documents are to be kept in the personnel file.

This Standard of Ministerial Behavior goes into effect October 1, 2023.

## **Standards of Ministerial Behavior: A Code of Conduct**

***“Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God.” Mt. 5:8***

The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, in force for the Church in the United States, mandates clear and well-publicized diocesan standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for clergy and all other Church Personnel who have regular contact with children and young people. (cf. Article 6) This Code is a response to that call to integrity both in relationships with children and young people, including vulnerable adults, as well as with the adult faith community.

Bishops, priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, administrators, staff, and volunteers in parishes, schools, agencies, ministries, religious communities/institutes and organizations must uphold Catholic values and conduct that are rooted in the Gospel. All those involved with ministry must be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work while knowing that God’s goodness and grace support those involved in ministry. All those involved with ministry shall be held accountable for their behavior. In order to maintain the highest level of accountability, each person involved with ministry is required to abide by this Code, which provides a set of standards outlining what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behavior in ministerial situations. This Code replaces the *Standards of Ministerial Behavior*, which was last revised in June of 2013.

**Responsibility for adherence to the Standards of Ministerial Behavior: A Code of Conduct rests with each individual.**

Those who disregard or violate this Code will be subject to disciplinary action by the Diocese of Camden, up to removal from ministry and/or termination. This policy is in accord with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and the USCCB Essential Norms for Diocesan Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons.

1. For the purposes of this policy, the term “Ministerial Personnel” is defined as follows:

- All clergy, that is, all bishops, priests and deacons who are incardinated in the Diocese of Camden, as well as all clergy who are not incardinated in the Diocese of Camden but who engage in ministry within the Diocese of Camden, whether they live within or outside of the territory of the Diocese of Camden.
  - All Seminarians for the Diocese of Camden and those who are enrolled in the Diocesan Permanent Diaconate Formation Program.
  - Members of Institutes of Consecrated Life or Societies of Apostolic Life who live within the territory of the Diocese of Camden and who work for, and/or are engaged in ministry in, the Diocese of Camden, as well as Hermits and Consecrated Virgins who live within the Diocese of Camden, and who work for, and/or are engaged in ministry in, the Diocese of Camden.
  - All paid personnel who are employed in areas of ministry by the diocese, its parishes, schools, or other agencies.
  - All volunteers who engage in any type of ministry, whether in the diocese, its parishes, schools, or other agencies.
2. For the purpose of this policy, the term “ministry” includes the provision of the Sacraments, catechetical witness and instruction in the doctrine and law of the Roman Catholic Church, delivery of sermons, homilies, talks, and conferences, the planning and execution of liturgies and para-liturgical events, including the planning and execution of music for them, and includes but is not limited to the planning, development, and operation of religious programs sponsored by the diocese, its parishes, schools, or other agencies.

## **I. Diocesan Requirements of all Ministerial Personnel**

**All Ministerial Personnel who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults<sup>1</sup> must fulfill the Safe Environment Policy requirements of the Diocese of Camden. All Ministerial Personnel must meet the following**

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<sup>1</sup> A vulnerable adult is understood as “any person in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally, limits their ability to understand or to want or otherwise resist the offence.” (art. 1 §2, b *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*)

**requirements before beginning any work with individuals covered by this policy:**

1. Complete a Virtus® Protecting God's Children training program within 60 days of initial contact with minors.
2. Read, understand, and agree in writing to follow this **Standards of Ministerial Behavior: A Code of Conduct of the Diocese of Camden**, by completing and signing the Acknowledgement and Statement of Commitment form found on the last page of this document.
3. Submit to and clear a criminal history background check process through the Diocese of Camden

## **STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

### **I. Conduct with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults**

1. **Team approach:** As a normal practice Ministerial Personnel shall not work or interact alone with children, youth and vulnerable adults; therefore, it is always advisable to use a team approach for managing activities with children, youth and vulnerable adults. This statement shall guide planning and operation of activities with children, youth and vulnerable adults in our Diocese. Adults are not to be alone with an individual child, young person, or vulnerable adult in an isolated area, for example, a room, motor vehicle, tent, etc. If an adult must be alone with a child, young person, or vulnerable adult, the area must have high visibility. Anyone passing by that area must be able to enter the area at any time.
2. **Physical Contact:** Physical contact with children is prohibited unless pastorally or ministerially necessary and appropriate. Repeated "appropriate" touch is inappropriate; adults shall not touch children routinely.
3. **Looking for affection:** No adult shall initiate or request hugs or other gestures of affection with a minor.
4. **Use of Gifts:** Other than for the purpose of recognition of achievement, Ministerial Personnel shall not give gifts to individual children, youth, or vulnerable adults without the advance permission of her/his

immediate supervisor and the recipient's family or guardian and shall always be done in public.

5. **Illegal Substances:** Providing alcohol, drugs (including marijuana), or tobacco to a minor or vulnerable adult or allowing their use is strictly prohibited. The possession and/or use of such products of any kind by Ministerial Personnel are strictly prohibited at all times when working in a ministerial capacity. If any Ministerial Personnel is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, it must be reported to a supervisor.
6. **Weapons are prohibited:** The possession and/or use of any weapons except by bona fide law enforcement personnel or in approved instructional or recreational situations, is strictly prohibited at all times when performing in a ministerial capacity. If any Ministerial Personnel is suspected to be in unlawful possession of a weapon, it must be immediately reported to a supervisor and law enforcement, as appropriate.
7. **Administering discipline:** Ministerial Personnel shall not strike, spank, shake, or slap children, young people or vulnerable adults, nor shall they humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade them in any way. Absolutely no abusive language or profanity is to be used, allowed, or tolerated in the presence of children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
8. **Boundary Violations:** When working or interacting with children, youth or vulnerable adults, Ministerial Personnel shall always take caution not to violate personal boundaries. Boundaries exist to protect both Ministerial Personnel and the persons with whom they work or interact. Boundaries are "limits or restrictions" to actions that serve to prevent ministry from being adversely affected, and they are critical to maintaining the professional integrity of the work or interaction of Ministerial Personnel with those whom they serve.

All Ministerial Personnel must respect the personal space and privacy of all children, youth and vulnerable adults, and shall keep in mind that children, youth, and vulnerable adults may read different interpretations into, or perceive differently, the actions of adults. It is also very easy for these situations to escalate if Ministerial Personnel are not sensitively, proactively and dynamically managing boundaries. The only possible exception to this would be action taken to safeguard children, youth, and vulnerable adults, from imminent bodily harm and the safe management of risk.

Actions to avoid:

- Unwarranted or unwanted touching of children, youth or vulnerable adults personally or with objects (for example: pencil, book, ruler, etc.).
  - Corporal punishment (for example: physical discipline, pushing, shoving, smacking, etc.).
  - Showering with or changing clothes in front of children, youth or vulnerable adults.
  - Initiating, permitting or requesting inappropriate or unnecessary physical contact with children, youth or vulnerable adults (for example: hugs, kisses, tickling, play fighting, etc.) or facilitating situations which unnecessarily result in close physical contact.
9. **Vehicles:** Ministerial Personnel must never be alone in a vehicle with a minor who is not their child or a member of their biological family. In all other situations, when a child is present in a vehicle, there must be at least one other adult present in the vehicle at all times.
10. **Overnight accommodations:** Ministerial Personnel must not be in a situation with shared or private overnight accommodations for children, young people, or vulnerable adults where there is no other adult supervision present. This includes, but is not limited to, accommodations in any Church owned facility, private residence or hotel room. Whether or not they are Ministerial Personnel, all chaperones for overnight activities are considered to have regular contact with minors and must complete the diocesan background check and Virtus© training.

## **II. Ministerial Relationships**

Ministerial Personnel must respect boundaries and shall not function beyond their qualifications and competence. When necessary and appropriate, a recommended referral appropriate for the situation shall be made. Ministerial Personnel must always respect the rights and advance the welfare of each person whom they serve.

Appropriate affection between Ministerial Personnel and minors is important for a child's development. It also constitutes a positive part of Church life

and ministry. However, Ministerial Personnel must always be aware that physical contact with children, and with youth and vulnerable adults, can be misconstrued and shall occur:

1. Only when completely nonsexual, that is, when there is no possibility of others perceiving it as sexual, and when such contact is otherwise appropriate, and
2. **Never** in private.

The following forms of affection are regarded as **appropriate** examples of affection for most Church sponsored and affiliated programs that are overseen by Ministerial Personnel:

- Side Hugs
- Light pats on the shoulder or back
- Hand shakes
- "High-fives" and hand slapping
- Verbal praise
- Light touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of minors
- Arms around shoulders (from the side, not face-to-face)
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Sitting beside small children
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
- Holding hands during prayer
- Light pats on the head when culturally appropriate. (For example, this gesture is typically to be avoided in some Asian communities.)

If at any time an individual indicates that any of these forms of contact makes him or her uncomfortable, the contact should stop immediately.

Some examples of affection that are **inappropriate** and shall not be used by Ministerial Personnel:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses on the mouth
- Holding anyone on the lap
- Touching buttocks, chests or genital areas

- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms
- Being in bed with anyone, except one's spouse
- Touching knees or legs of anyone
- Wrestling with anyone
- Tickling with anyone
- Piggyback rides
- Any type of massage given by minor to adult
- Any type of massage given by adult to minor
- Any form of unwanted affection
- Compliments that relate to physique or body development
- Repeated "appropriate" touches

Ministerial Personnel shall conduct gatherings, classes, and meetings in appropriate settings at appropriate times, that is, in an office or common area with unobstructed windows or an open door, and during day or early evening hours, and shall not be conducted in private living quarters.

Gatherings, classes, and meetings shall not be held at places or times that tend to cause confusion about the nature of the relationship for any child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

Ministerial Personnel may visit those who are sick and/or homebound in private residences, especially to confer Sacraments.

If at any time a Ministerial Personnel comes in contact with a minor and sexual abuse of the minor is disclosed, discussion of the abuse shall cease, and the disclosed abuse shall be reported to the New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency at 1-877-652-2873 and to the Diocesan liaison at 1-609-238-7350 who shall, when applicable, report it to the appropriate County Prosecutor.

Under no circumstances shall the person identified as the suspected abuser be provided details as to the allegations or as to the minor involved until law enforcement has had an opportunity to investigate.



Knowledge obtained during ministry may be used in teaching, writing, homilies or other public presentations only when effective measures are taken to absolutely safeguard:

1. The identity of any individual who disclosed the information,
2. Any identifying information of any kind as to such individual, and
3. The confidentiality of the disclosure.

### **III. Sexual Misconduct**

Ministerial Personnel must not, for sexual gain or intimacy, exploit the trust placed in them by the faith community.

1. Ministerial Personnel who are committed to a celibate lifestyle are called to be an example of celibate chastity in all relationships at all times.
2. Inappropriately intimate relationships with minors, other staff, whether paid or volunteer, or parishioners of any age or sex are strictly prohibited.
3. Acquisition, possession, or distribution by Ministerial Personnel of any pornographic images, for any reason, by whatever means or using whatever technology, are strictly prohibited.
4. Acquisition, possession, or distribution by Ministerial Personnel of any pornographic images of minors under the age of eighteen, for any reason, by whatever means or using whatever technology, are strictly prohibited and will be reported to law enforcement because they are criminal offenses pursuant to the laws of the State of New Jersey and the United States of America.

### **IV. Harassment and Bullying**

Ministerial Personnel shall not engage in physical, psychological, written, technology-related or verbal harassment or bullying of any person of any age or sex, including staff, volunteers, or parishioners and shall not tolerate such harassment or bullying by other Ministerial Personnel.

Ministerial Personnel shall provide a professional work and service environment.

Harassment or bullying includes but is not limited to:

- verbal harassment
- gender bias
- sexual harassment
- foul language.

Harassment includes conduct such as any form of bullying or intimidation (including the use of electronic communication). Bullying is unreasonable behavior that generally is persistent, and that demeans, intimidates, and humiliates anyone, including employees or volunteers, either as individuals or as a group.

Harassment also includes a display of offensive materials, such as sexually explicit materials, pornography, expressions of hate and discrimination, sex or race based cartoons, etc.

Sexual harassment on the part of Ministerial Personnel in the workplace is unlawful and will not be tolerated there or in the course of volunteer service. Sexual harassment can and does vary in degree, from “locker room” jokes to explicit requests for sexual favors. Any behavior of this type, regardless of the degree, is prohibited and strictly against Diocesan policy.

There are, however, appropriate social relationships that Ministerial Personnel may engage in at work and in volunteer service that do not have a discriminatory or deleterious effect. Sexual harassment does not refer to compliments of a socially acceptable nature. Rather, sexual harassment refers to behavior that is unwelcome or that is personally offensive.

All harassment and bullying shall be taken seriously and shall be immediately reported to the appropriate supervising Ministerial Personnel, the Office of Child and Youth Protection, or Human Resources.

When there is an allegation of sexual harassment of any adult or child, the proper authorities, that is, the Office of the New Jersey Department of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) and the General Counsel of the Diocese must be contacted immediately so that the allegations can be appropriately

investigated. It is inappropriate for any Ministerial Personnel to hold initial meetings convening all or even some of the parties involved in a sexual harassment matter.

In all other allegations of harassment or bullying it is inappropriate to investigate or attempt to broker a solution to the matter without first consulting Human Resources or the General Counsel of the Diocese.

The Diocese of Camden's procedures as outlined in the Employee Handbook for Employees of the Diocese of Camden shall be followed, where applicable, to protect the rights of all involved. Employees of, and volunteers at, parishes, schools, and other entities shall adhere to the procedures as outlined in any handbook that is applicable to them.

## **V. Reporting Requirements**

IF ANY MINISTERIAL PERSONNEL BELIEVE THAT A CHILD IS IN IMMINENT DANGER FROM ABUSE OR NEGLECT, CALL 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY.

All Ministerial Personnel must be aware of the strict obligation to report promptly any allegation of abuse or neglect of a minor.

All Ministerial Personnel must report abuse or neglect perpetrated by anyone, including any other Ministerial Personnel, if information is received from any source so as to give reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, IMMEDIATELY:

1. Contact New Jersey Child Department of Protection and Permanency (DCPP): DCPP Hotline: 1-877-652-2873.

**State of New Jersey law requires that any person who has reasonable cause to believe that child abuse or neglect is or has occurred must report it immediately to the DCPP.**

2. Next contact the Diocesan General Counsel : James J. Godino, Jr., Esq., at (609) 238-7350.

“Immediately” in the above paragraphs means that it must be done without any delay whatsoever. This will allow Ministerial Personnel to follow the law and avoid the legal consequences of a delay in reporting. The obligation to report abuse is not subject to the consent of the victim, parent, legal guardian, or person aware of the abuse.

### **RESPONDING TO VICTIMS OF ABUSE**

**THE DIOCESE DOES NOT INVESTIGATE PENDING SEXUAL ABUSE ALLEGATIONS. INVESTIGATION IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF LAW ENFORCEMENT, AS OUTLINED ABOVE. NO MINISTERIAL PERSONNEL SHALL INITIATE ANY INVESTIGATION OF SEXUAL ABUSE ALLEGATIONS ON HIS/HER/THEIR OWN.**

## Acknowledgement and Statement of Commitment

### Standards of Ministerial Behavior: A Code of Conduct of the Diocese of Camden

I have received a copy of, read, and understand, the above **Standards of Ministerial Behavior: A Code of Conduct of the Diocese of Camden**, and I commit to uphold this Code in my ministry and/or work. I realize and fully understand that any violation of the Code on my part will make me subject to disciplinary action and may result in the immediate termination of my employment or volunteer service.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your role in the Diocese? \_\_\_\_\_

Parish, School, Agency, Religious Community or Organization:

\_\_\_\_\_

Location(s):  
\_\_\_\_\_