

DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER  
*Serving Christ, Serving Others: Code of Ministerial Conduct*  
November 2019

**Executive Summary**

**Introduction**

1. As priests, deacons, religious women and men, pastoral ministers, administrators, staff, and volunteers within our parishes, schools, and institutions, we must always seek to uphold Christian values and conduct. The *Serving Christ, Serving Others* Code of Ministerial Conduct (“Code”) does not presume to address all situations that may face those of us who minister in the Church. This Code is intended to provide a context in which to understand the requirement for personal integrity in ministry through standards of appropriate behavior as well as an articulation of the level of accountability that we need to expect of one another.

**Applicability**

2. This Code applies to all Church personnel employed or engaged in ministry for the Diocese of Manchester, its parishes, schools, institutions, and agencies. Because of the grave responsibilities associated with their work and positions, bishops, priests, and deacons are held to higher standards of behavior than other Church personnel.

**General Principles of Ethics and Integrity in Ministry**

3. Standards for Ethical and Moral Behavior: Beyond the obvious standards for correct moral behavior in Sacred Scripture and the Tradition of the Church (i.e., the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Catechism of the Catholic Church), Church personnel are required to behave in a manner consistent with accepted Catholic standards of moral and ethical conduct. Additional, more specific standards are set forth in the Code.

4. Standards for Integrity in Ministry: Church personnel are prohibited from engaging in harassment, including sexual harassment, and sexual exploitation. Church personnel must avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest. Church personnel must maintain ministerial confidentiality but may not keep secrets that might allow harm to come to anyone. Additional, more specific standards are set forth in the Code.

5. Standards for Working with Minors:

- a. Church personnel must be aware of their own vulnerability and that of any minor with whom they are working. Church personnel should avoid situations where they are alone with a minor. When it is not feasible to have another individual present, such as when counseling or teaching a minor, Church personnel must meet with the minor in as public a place as possible, such as a room with the door open or with a clear window in the door.
- b. Church personnel are prohibited from speaking to minors in a way that is or could be construed by any observer as being harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Church personnel are expected to refrain from using profane language in the presence of minors and must never use any discipline that frightens or

humiliates children and youth. Church personnel are prohibited from using physical discipline including but not limited to spanking, slapping, hitting, or any other physical force. If a minor exhibits uncontrollable or unusual behavior, the Church worker or volunteer should notify the appropriate supervisor and a parent or guardian of the minor.

- c. Church personnel must not use or supply alcohol (excepting sacramental wine in Mass) and/or illegal drugs when working with minors or while participating in a youth activity. Moreover, Church personnel must not be under the influence of alcohol or impairing drugs (including prescription medication that causes impairment) while working with minors.
- d. Church personnel must not provide any sexually explicit, inappropriate, or offensive material to minors. Church personnel are prohibited from possessing or viewing any sexually-oriented or morally inappropriate printed materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) on Church property or in the presence of minors. Church personnel are also prohibited from viewing sexually-oriented or morally inappropriate websites or viewing or sending such electronic mail messages on Church property, while using Church equipment, or in the presence of minors.
- e. It is expected that from time to time youth ministry and educational lessons and discussions for teenagers may address human sexuality issues related to dating and sex, consistent with Catholic teaching. Moreover, it is expected that minors may raise issues relating to sexuality during counseling sessions. Lessons and counseling must convey to youth the Church's teaching on these topics. If youth have further questions not answered or addressed, they should be referred to their parents or guardians for clarification or counseling. In addition, Church personnel are prohibited from discussing their own sexual orientation, activities, practices, or history with minors, and Church personnel are prohibited from initiating any sexually-oriented conversations with minors whether orally, in writing, or electronically.
- f. Physical contact with minors beyond a handshake or a "high-five" can be misconstrued both by minors and adults, and should not occur except under appropriate *public* circumstances. The following are examples (not an exclusive list) of behavior in which Church personnel should never engage with minors: inappropriate or lengthy embraces; kisses on the mouth; holding minors over five years old on the lap; intentionally touching bottoms, chests, legs, or genital areas; showing affection while in an isolated location; wrestling or giving piggyback rides; giving massages; or paying compliments that relate to physique or body development.
- g. Church personnel must not go on overnight trips with minors other than their own relatives unless another adult is present. They must not share beds with minors other than their own children nor share sleeping quarters with minors except when necessary and when another adult is present. Church personnel must not provide overnight accommodations in rectories or other personal residences for minors other than minors with a close familial relationship or when minors are accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.
- h. Church personnel should never be nude in the presence of minors in their care and should avoid situations where minors are nude while in their care. If monitoring of showering or changing facilities is necessary, two or more adults should be present at all times. Changing and showering facilities or arrangements for adults should be separate from facilities or arrangements for minors.

- i. Church personnel should be familiar with the diocesan Electronic Communications Policy and must abide by it.
  - j. Church personnel should be aware of the signs of “grooming” (the process by which sexual predators attempt to manipulate their potential victims) and must not engage in practices with youth that could be perceived by a reasonable person to be “grooming.” Some examples of grooming behaviors are: giving non-token gifts to minors; contacting minors outside of the Church setting; showing favoritism to select minors; overstepping appropriate boundaries of adult-minor relationships by acting as a friend or peer; allowing minors to break established rules; and establishing separate, private relationships with minors.
  - k. Parents are encouraged to be a part of any and all services and programs in which their children are involved in the Diocese of Manchester. Parents may contact their child’s school or parish in order to make arrangements to observe programs or activities in which their children are involved.
  - l. At the close of services or activities, Church personnel should release minors in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians. In the event that Church personnel are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a minor, they should immediately locate or contact their supervisor before releasing the child.
  - m. In order to provide transportation to minors, Church personnel must be properly insured and meet the eligibility requirements established by the Diocese of Manchester. Minors should never be transported by Church personnel without written permission from a parent or guardian, except in the case of an emergency. Church personnel should transport minors directly to their destination, and no unauthorized stops should be made. Church personnel must require all minors to wear seatbelts or, when appropriate, be strapped into car seats.
  - n. When taking minors on outings or field trips, Church personnel should abide by diocesan established adult-minor ratios. No fewer than two (2) adult chaperones are allowed for any outing or trip involving minors, and additional chaperones are required depending upon the number of minors.
6. Standards for Spiritual and Pastoral Counseling Relationships: Church personnel must respect the rights and welfare of those counseled/ministered to and must maintain appropriate boundaries with those whom they serve. Additional, more specific standards are set forth in the Code.

**Violations of the Code of Ministerial Conduct**

- 7. Reporting Incidents, Allegations, and Concerns: Church personnel have a duty to report observations of violations of the Code. If Church personnel suspect that a minor has been subjected to abuse, they must comply with the reporting requirements under New Hampshire law and the Diocese of Manchester *Promise to Protect, Pledge to Heal Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People*. Reports of other violations of the Code may be made to the head of the Church institution (pastor, principal, or director) where the conduct took place, the Delegate for Ministerial Conduct (603-669-3100 or [delegate@rcbm.org](mailto:delegate@rcbm.org)), or the Bishop (603-669-3100).
- 8. Reporting Procedures for Allegations of Bishop Misconduct: Allegations involving a bishop should be reported to the appropriate third party reporting system, details of which may be found on the Diocese of Manchester website, [www.catholicnh.org](http://www.catholicnh.org).

9. Retaliation: Retaliation against those who make reports under the Code is prohibited. Church personnel who believe that they have been subjected to retaliation for making reports under this Code should report the matter to the Delegate for Ministerial Conduct (603-669-3100 or [delegate@rcbm.org](mailto:delegate@rcbm.org)) or the Bishop (603-669-3100).
10. Investigating Concerns: All reports of violations of the Code will be taken seriously, and investigations into allegations of unethical behavior or violations of the Code will be conducted thoroughly and expeditiously, with objectivity, fairness, and justice and in a manner consistent with Church law.
11. Disciplinary Action: Church personnel who engage in unethical behavior or otherwise fail to abide by the standards contained in the Code will be subjected to appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action, up to and including appropriate canonical penalties for clergy and termination of employment or volunteer ministry with the Church. When it has been determined that a violation of the Code of Conduct has occurred and remedial or corrective action is recommended, it is expected that the response of the individual who violated the Code will be one of thoughtful consideration, willingness to examine one's own behavior, and sincere commitment to change.
12. Pastoral Care and Support: The Diocese will extend appropriate pastoral care to those directly affected by allegations of unethical behavior or other violations of the standards in the Code by Church personnel as well as to those accused of unethical behavior and those communities affected by allegations.