



# CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR CHURCH PERSONNEL

ARCHDIOCESE OF SEATTLE  
SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

Office of Human Resources

October 1, 2007

Revised, July 2011

*Church personnel\* are called to high standards of ethical conduct and personal integrity. In our work, including as it relates to conduct, all have a sacred responsibility to uphold Church teaching. Furthermore, those in leadership roles and ministerial positions have a responsibility to lead a personal life that bears witness to Catholic teaching and avoids scandal.*

\* Church personnel include clerics, religious men and women, and lay employees and volunteers in the Archdiocese of Seattle as defined in the *Policy for Prevention of and Response to Sexual Abuse, Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment*.

In order to assure that Church personnel act in a manner consistent with Church teaching and ethical standards, Church personnel are required to:

- Respect the dignity of each person as made in the image and likeness of God;
- Protect those who are vulnerable, including those who are young, elderly, living with disabilities, grieving and under emotional or mental stress;
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries to avoid impropriety or the appearance of impropriety;
- Conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the discipline, norms and teachings of the Church;
- Follow Archdiocesan policies;
- Maintain confidentiality;
- Refer people to appropriate professional resources for counseling services;
- Respect the right of all persons to a good reputation; and
- Report violations of policy or suspected violations of policy to the appropriate civil and/or Church authorities.

Church personnel are prohibited from engaging in the following conduct. This list is not exhaustive.

- Crimes against persons;
- Immoral conduct;
- Actions disruptive to ministry and public worship;
- Stealing or any form of theft, including misappropriation of Church funds;
- Possession or distribution of pornographic material;
- Adultery, promiscuity or illicit co-habitation;
- Engaging in sexual abuse, sexual misconduct or sexual harassment; or
- Failure to follow Archdiocesan policies.

## APPROPRIATE INTERACTIONS

Appropriate interactions between Church personnel and minors or vulnerable adults are a positive aspect of Church life and ministry and promote healthy development. Depending on the circumstances, the following forms of interaction are customarily (but not always) regarded as appropriate.

Examples of Appropriate Physical Contact:

- Short hugs (particularly side to side hugs);
- Pats on the shoulder or back;
- Handshakes;
- "High-fives;"
- Holding hands while walking with small children;
- Sitting beside small children;
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children; or
- Holding hands during prayer.

#### Examples of Appropriate Behavior:

- Maintaining professional relationships with minors or vulnerable adults and their families;
- Following appropriate instructions of parent or guardian;
- Informing parent or guardian of activities; or
- Acquiring appropriate signed permission forms for all events.

#### Examples of Appropriate Verbal Interactions:

- Positive reinforcement;
- Verbal praise; or
- Appropriate jokes and age-appropriate humor.

## INAPPROPRIATE INTERACTIONS

Some forms of interaction with minors or vulnerable adults have been used by adults to initiate inappropriate contact. Physical contact should generally be initiated by minors or vulnerable adults. In order to maintain a safe environment for minors and vulnerable adults, the following are examples of activities to be avoided.

#### Examples of Inappropriate Physical Interactions:

- Lengthy hugs or forceful frontal hugs;
- Kisses on the mouth;
- Holding minors over four years old on the lap;
- Touching buttocks or genital areas;
- Being in bed with a minor;
- Wrestling;
- Tickling;
- Piggyback rides; or
- Any type of massage given by or to Church personnel.

#### Examples of Inappropriate Behavior:

- Giving personal email, telephone number or residence location to a minor, vulnerable adult or person to whom they minister;
- Being alone with a minor or vulnerable adult in a private setting;
- Allowing minors or vulnerable adults to break rules or violate the law;
- Offering alcohol to minors or illegal drugs to anyone;
- Using, possessing or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of minors to whom they minister;
- Showers with or in the immediate presence of a minor or vulnerable adult;
- Exposing a minor or vulnerable adult to sexually oriented or morally inappropriate materials;
- Transporting a minor or vulnerable adult alone;
- Giving gifts to minors or vulnerable adults, except with the consent of the parent or guardian and when distributed equitably; or
- Giving money to minors or vulnerable adults.

### Examples of Inappropriate Verbal Interactions:

- Swearing;
- Telling sexually suggestive jokes;
- Shaming;
- Comments relating to physique or body development;
- Involving minors or vulnerable adults in personal problems or issues of adults;
- Asking minors or vulnerable adults to keep secrets from their parents or guardians;
- Derogatory remarks about a minor or vulnerable adults family; or
- Engaging in sexually oriented conversations unless part of a legitimate lesson in an approved program, in accord with Church teaching.

### ELECTRONIC/ONLINE CONDUCT

How we publicly represent ourselves and our programs to the public should reflect our identity as Church. The standards of ethical conduct and personal integrity extend to all forms of written, verbal and electronic communications.

- Church personnel should not email people to whom they minister from a private email account. All correspondence should be through a work email address (or email designated for work use).
  - When communicating with<sup>1</sup> minors, all communication should also be copied to supervisor (or parents).
- Church personnel should not communicate via instant messenger ("chat") with people to whom they minister from a private account.
- Church personnel should not text message with people to whom they minister from a private account.
- All social media presence for any parish, school or archdiocesan program must conform to Catholic teaching and current archdiocesan policies. This includes but is not limited to Facebook, Twitter, etc.<sup>2</sup>
- Church personnel using social media for personal use should be aware that any information displayed therein may be evaluated in light of the individual's position in the Church. These sites should not be used to have contact with people to whom they minister or provide any program or parish information.

**ARCHDIOCESAN HOTLINE: 1-800-446-7762**

1. "...communicating with..." added for policy revision effective July 2011.

2. "All social media presence for any parish, school or archdiocesan program must conform to Catholic teaching and current archdiocesan policies." Added for policy revision effective July 2011.