



Diocese of Bismarck Code of Conduct

Guidelines for:

Ministerial Behavior

Appropriate Boundaries for Clergy and Church Personnel

The Use of Technology and Social Media

A Safe Environment for Minors

Chaperones & Supervisors of Minors at Group Activities

Safe Environment Training for the Prevention of Child Abuse

Including:

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Acknowledgement Form

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The Diocese of Bismarck defines these standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for clergy and church personnel for these reasons. First and foremost, the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*¹ asks for clear mandates and well-publicized standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for anyone who has regular contact with children and young people. Beyond this, most professions have defined ethical standards. We also know that an awareness of our boundaries is useful in our relationships and, in fact, helps us sustain a healthy relationship with anyone. The Catholic Church must be exemplary. Clergy, staff, whether diocese or parish, and volunteers are held accountable for their behavior. To enable the highest level of accountability, there must be a clear and unambiguous definition of appropriate behavior. To this end, this *Code of Conduct* is defined for the Diocese of Bismarck and it provides a foundation for implementing effective and enforceable standards for all personnel.

- 1. Conduct for Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors:** Pastoral counselors and spiritual directors who conduct counseling for individuals, families or groups must respect the rights and advance the welfare of each person. So counselors or spiritual directors:
 - 1.1. shall not step beyond their competence in counseling situations and shall refer clients to other professionals when appropriate. Parameters for Church leaders² are dictated by their education or certification from a recognized professional association of peers.
 - 1.2. ordinarily do not enter into a counseling relationship with someone with whom they have a pre-existing relationship (i.e. employee, professional colleague, friend).
 - 1.3. make it clear what they can provide to a counselee when that person is already in a counseling relationship with another professional. Generally, this is confined to spiritual assistance.
 - 1.4. do not engage in any type of sexual intimacy with those whom they counsel.
 - 1.5. avoid physical contact of any kind (i.e. touching, hugging, holding) with persons they counsel.
 - 1.6. conduct sessions in appropriate settings at appropriate times. No session is to be conducted in private living quarters or at places or times that would be ambiguous or misleading to the client.
 - 1.7. should be cognizant at all times of the significance of boundaries in counseling relationships and ordinarily do not socialize with a client.
 - 1.8. assume the full responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all counseling relationships.

¹ *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C. July 2002, Article Six, p. 9.

² The term "Church leader" is used in order to indicate all those who represent the Church by virtue of office or designated position, i.e. priests, deacons, pastoral associates/ministers, parish and diocesan staffs and volunteers.

- 1.9. hold themselves accountable in conducting counseling activities. They should keep a calendar of times and places of contacts, especially in the case of frequent meetings with the same person. No information is to be disclosed from counseling sessions unless there is clear and imminent danger to the client or to others. In such a case, authorities or other professionals are to be contacted.
2. **Confidentiality:** Information disclosed to anyone during the course of pastoral counseling, advising, spiritual direction and any other professional contact shall be held in the strictest confidence possible. Anyone to whom such disclosures are entrusted:
 - 2.1 is bound to safeguard the confidentiality of any information, including notes, files or computer records pertaining to professional contact with individuals.
 - 2.2 discusses the nature of confidentiality and its limitations with each person within such a relationship.
 - 2.3 consults another professional with utmost care, limiting information shared with the assurance the other professional is bound to the same degree of confidentiality. If the other professional is not so bound, the disclosure should not be made.
 - 2.4 uses knowledge that arises from professional contact in teaching, writing, preaching, or other public presentations or discussions only when effective measures are taken to absolutely safeguard both the individual's identity and the confidentiality of the disclosures.
 - 2.5 obtains the written, informed consent of the individual prior to making the disclosure.
 - 2.6 instructs a minor from the outset of the pastoral relationship regarding these exceptions to the ordinary rights of confidentiality: threats of self-inflicted harm to the minor and threats against others because of the minor's emotional status or behavior. Great care and judgment must be exercised in determining the appropriateness of this kind of disclosure and in balancing the ultimate welfare of the minor being counseled with the duty to warn.
 - 2.7 knows these obligations are independent of and supplementary to the confidentiality of the sacrament of penance. **Under no circumstances whatsoever can there be any disclosure, even indirect, of information received through the confessional.**
 - 2.8 knows that obligations of confidentiality regarding other areas are defined in the *Personnel Policies and Procedures* for the Diocese of Bismarck and these are to be observed at all times.
3. **Conduct with a Minor:** Definition of a Minor: A minor is defined as a person below the age of 18 years. Any vulnerable adult or one who habitually lacks the use of reason is to be considered equivalent to a minor. All persons working with minors should use appropriate judgment to insure trusting relationships marked by personal and professional integrity. Keen awareness of their own and others' vulnerability assures they:

- 3.1 establish a counseling relationship with a minor that respects the role of the family in subsequent relationships and avoid any exclusive relationship with a minor.
 - 3.2 use a team approach to managing youth activities and emergency situations.
 - 3.3 avoid physical contact with youth, for this can be misconstrued by both minors and other adults. Completely non-sexual and otherwise appropriate physical contact may occur under public circumstances but never in private.
 - 3.4 refrain from using or supplying alcohol and/or illegal drugs at all times when working with minors/youth.
 - 3.5 do not allow individual young people to stay overnight in a cleric's rectory or private accommodations, hotel room or any personal residence.
 - 3.6 do not provide any sexually explicit, inappropriate or offensive material to minors/youth. Pornographic material is prohibited. This includes the acquisition, possession, or distribution of child pornography by a cleric and all persons working with minors, vulnerable adults or those who habitually lack the use of reason.
4. **Sexual Conduct:** Church leaders must not, for sexual gain or intimacy, exploit the trust placed in them by the parish community and others to and with whom they minister. So they:
- 4.1 do not exploit another person for sexual purposes.
 - 4.2 provide an example of celibate chastity in all relationships at all times if they have the commitment of a celibate lifestyle. Likewise, those who have a marital commitment are called to witness to this fidelity in all relationships.
 - 4.3 fulfill a personal and professional obligation to be knowledgeable about what constitutes sexual exploitation of another and to be familiar with the laws of the State of North Dakota regarding sexual exploitation, abuse and assault.
 - 4.4 take seriously any allegation of sexual misconduct and report it to the chancellor or to the vicar general as defined in the *Policy on Sexual Misconduct* for the Diocese of Bismarck.
 - 4.5 comply with all mandatory reporting requirements of the State of North Dakota in collaboration with Church officials and defined policy.
5. **Reporting Misconduct:** Clergy, staff and volunteers have a duty and responsibility to report ethical or professional misconduct on the part of any church leader. So they shall:
- 5.1 must hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical or professional standards as defined within this *Code of Conduct*. When they observe any clear indication of illegal actions by a Church leader, they make immediate notification to proper church and civil authorities.

5.2 notify proper Church authorities only, when there are clear indicators of unethical but not illegal actions on the part of a Church leader.

5.3 attempt to resolve the issue when uncertainty exists about whether a situation violates this *Code of Conduct* or other religious, moral or ethical principles, by consulting with the next higher authority or by referral to the chancellor or vicar general through the Chancery for the Diocese of Bismarck.

6. Administration: Those in Church leadership shall exercise just treatment of those with whom they minister in the day-to-day administrative operation of their ministries. So they shall:

6.1 seek to relate to all people with respect, sensitivity and reverence. Meetings are to be conducted with patience and courtesy toward the views of others, in an environment where it is safe for constructive criticism to be offered.

6.2 empower others, supporting each person to live the life to which God calls her/him. They are to seek to work in ways that respect the different talents people bring to the Church.

6.3 exercise responsible stewardship of all parish and diocesan resources. They must also ensure that whatever their area of ministry, there is a clear accounting of all parish, diocesan or other Church funds.

6.4 ensure that systems are in place to protect both the Church and the individual from financial mismanagement.

6.5 develop personnel and other administrative decisions that not only meet civil and Canon Law obligations, but also reflect Catholic social teachings and this *Code of Conduct*.

7. Professional Behavior and Harassment: Those in Church leadership do not engage in physical, psychological or verbal harassment of employees, volunteers or parishioners and they will not tolerate such harassment by other Church employees or volunteers. Thus, they:

7.1 are committed to providing a professional work environment for employees which is totally free from physical, psychological, written or verbal intimidation or harassment.

7.2 understand harassment encompasses a broad range of physical or verbal behavior which includes, but not limited to: a) uninvited letters, telephone calls or materials of a sexual nature; b) uninvited sexual aggressive looks, touching or gestures; c) uninvited pressure for sexual favors; d) uninvited pressure for dates; e) uninvited sexual teasing, jokes, remarks, or questions; suggestions that indicate that men or women should not hold certain positions because they are not capable of carrying out certain functions; f) racial or ethnic insults; g) attempted or actual rape or sexual assault.

7.3 realize that harassment can occur as a result of a single severe incident or a pattern of conduct which results in the creation of a hostile, offensive or intimidating work environment.

7.4 follow the established procedure for reporting harassment and they are to ensure that no retaliation for bringing forward a claim of harassment will be tolerated.

7.5 take allegations of harassment seriously and insure timely reporting for both employees and volunteers.

8. Records and Information: Appropriate confidentiality shall be maintained in creating, storing, accessing, transferring and disposing of parish and diocesan records as defined in related policies.

8.1 Sacramental records shall be regarded as confidential. When, for valid Church reporting or parish statistical purposes, information from these records is made public, great care must be taken to preserve the anonymity of individuals.

8.2 Sacramental records older than seventy years may be accessible to public inquiries. Regardless of age, information regarding adoption and legitimacy remains confidential. Only a staff member so authorized to access records may supervise and handle requests regarding records.

8.3 Parish and diocesan financial records are held as confidential, unless an appropriate review is required by a governmental agency or office. The Fiscal Office of the Diocese of Bismarck is to be contacted regarding the release of financial records.

8.4 Records of individual contributions to a parish or the Diocese of Bismarck shall be regarded as private and shall be maintained in strict confidence and used only as necessary.

9. Conflicts of Interest: Church leaders avoid putting themselves in a position that might present a conflict of interest, since the existence, or even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call into question one's integrity and professional conduct. They understand that:

9.1 potential for a conflict of interest exists in many circumstances. Some examples include: conducting private business or other dealings with the Church or any of its members; accepting substantial gifts for services or favors; employing or engaging in transactions with her/his friends or relatives; acting with partiality toward employees or Church members; or violating a confidence for personal gain.

9.2 they should disclose all relevant factors that potentially could create a conflict of interest.

9.3 they should inform all parties when a real or potential conflict of interest arises. Resolution of the issues must protect the person receiving ministry services.

Guidelines for the Use of Technology and Social Media

This diocesan code provides guidance to personnel on the use of technology and social media. They are guidelines and are not meant to be policy. The goal of this code is to empower personnel in the use of technology and social media and to give clarity, guidance, and best practices in the use of technology and social media.

Parts of this Code are adapted from documents of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Diocese of San Jose, the Diocese of Toledo, the Diocese of Rockford, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Washington, D.C. We are grateful to these entities for their permission to use their documents.

Introduction

These Guidelines for the Use of Technology and Social Media is designed to aid all employees and volunteers of the Diocese of Bismarck, and all diocesan parishes, schools, institutions and other diocesan entities (hereinafter referred to as *personnel*) in understanding appropriate usage, boundaries and best practices in technology and social media.

Personnel are required to act as reasonably prudent persons when using technology and social media, meaning, he or she acts in moderation, follows community ethics, and exercises due care.

The Church can use social media to encourage respectful dialogue and honest relationships. To do so requires us to approach social media as means of evangelization and to consider the Church's role in providing a Christian perspective on social media literacy.

Guiding Principles

Advances in technology have increased the opportunities for the church to communicate her message. For us in the Church, technology and social media can be considered tools for communication, catechesis and evangelization. Technology and social media however, should not be the only tools. They should not become an expedient and convenient means to evade the complicated and integrated work of building human relationships, which usually calls for in-person contact. Technology and social media at times fall short in truly enhancing the connectedness of human-to-human, face-to-face social interaction.

The key question that faces our church personnel when deciding to engage technology and social media is- *how will we engage?* Careful consideration should be used in determining the particular strengths of each form of media (blogs, social networks, text messaging, etc.) and the needs of a parish, school, and Diocesan institution or entity. The strengths should match the needs. Simply establishing a web presence is not enough. The parish, school, or Diocesan institution or entity should set expectations regarding how often content is updated/posted and what content is updated/posted. For instance, a blog post may not be the most effective way to remind the parish faithful of the annual picnic. However, a mass text message to athletes and their parents reminding them that practice begins at 9 a.m. may be very effective.

Boundaries

It is inappropriate for personnel to include minors and vulnerable adults within their own social circle, on-line or otherwise. Church personnel should not be accessible on a constant or on-call or social basis to the minors and vulnerable adults they serve. Personnel are duty-bound to set the boundary.

Be selective – a variety of digital media is available. Use the right medium for your message.

Be responsible –members of individual Diocesan churches and/or other entities are personally responsible for their posted content, and will be held personally accountable for such. Official statements of parish or Diocesan policies may only be made by the Pastor/Administrator.

Be smart – a blog or community post in a forum is visible to the entire world—it is public and permanent. Be respectful of your Catholic community.

Identify yourself – Use real identities rather than anonymous or fictitious-names, identities, posts and comments.

Respect the privacy of others – do not publish the personal information of others in the community without their permission or, in the case of minors and vulnerable adults, without the permission of their parents.

Be respectful –respect your audience, express your views with appropriate language, civility, and be respectful of the Church and her teachings. Your communications must not offend the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Do not tell secrets – respect the confidentiality of matters that are shared with you in confidence, or that are meant to be kept confidential by the nature of your work, ministry or volunteer mission. Be mindful, however, of your charge as a mandated reporter and that confidentiality cannot apply in situations that require you to report under the mandated reporter law.

Primacy of Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their children in faith and the first heralds of the faith. Personnel must recognize the importance of the role of parents and guardians when personnel use technological forms of communication with minors and vulnerable adults. As a Church, we seek a partnership with parents/guardians in the faith formation of their children. Be aware that many young people utilize technology, socially or otherwise, with and without the permission of their parents/guardian. Personnel are to receive permission from the parents/guardians of each minor and vulnerable adult with whom personnel wish to communicate through social media and technology and shall respect their authority. Personnel may provide them with information regarding safe use of technology and social media for their children.

Discretion

As a representative of the Church, those who work with the Church faithful should be diligent in avoiding situations which might be the source of scandal for themselves, others, or the Church.

Ownership

Any technological tools that we use as part of our work or volunteering in the Diocese of Bismarck, such as websites, blogs, social network sites, and the like, are the property of the Diocese of Bismarck.

1. *Use of Official Name and Logo.* Any use of the logo of the Diocese of Bismarck and its entities for branding or titling pages, blogs, or other similar elements of social media must be approved in writing by the Diocese of Bismarck prior to use. Requests for consent to use such names or logos are to be made to the Communications Director (in the case of the Diocese, its institutions or entities, and its or their Administration) the pastor (in the case of the parish and its ministries or administration) and the Principal (in the case of the school). Any uses in existence at the time of adoption of this Code are not grandfathered and should be authorized. Permission to use the name or logo of the Diocese, parish, school, Diocesan institution or entity may be revoked at any time in the sole discretion of the Diocese, parish, school, Diocesan institution or entity.

2. *Interpretation.* Questions on interpretation of this Code may be sent to the Director of Communications for the Diocese of Bismarck.

3. *Duties of Moderators.* Each parish, school, Diocesan institution or entity that has a social media vehicle must have two adult moderators. Moderators of parish, school, institution or entity social media are responsible for ensuring compliance with this and all Diocesan policies and codes of conduct. All comment and blog response areas must be moderated.

4. *Individual Judgment.* Personnel should use prudent and reasonable judgment when engaging in social media activities and should be on guard against actions and discussions that could harm the interests of themselves, the community, or the Church.

5. *Copyright Laws.* Personnel must comply fully with copyright law when using social media and technology

6. *Privacy.* Personnel are to safeguard the privacy interests of others. In particular, personally identifiable information (that is, name, phone number, address or email address), should not be disclosed without the prior consent of the person identified. .

7. *Additional Guidelines.* Pastors and Administrators of parishes, schools, Diocesan institutions or entities may implement more restrictive rules for the use of social media and technology if they deem it appropriate.

8. *Abuses.* Any use of social media that violates this Code or any other Diocesan policy should be brought to the attention of the Pastor/Administrator or the Diocesan Communications Director immediately.

9. *Questions and Updates.* Questions concerning interpretation of this document should be directed to the Communications Director at info@bismarckdiocese.com. This document may be updated and modified at any time. This document and any future modifications will be made available at www.bismarckdiocese.com where it will be available in its entirety.

10 Guidelines for the Use of Technology and Social Media

1. All personnel representing the Diocese of Bismarck must take great care to be reasonable and prudent in the use of social media and technology, and must adhere to Diocesan codes of conduct.
2. All usage of social media is public and permanent and thus requires discretion and prudence.
3. Distinct lines are to be drawn between professional relationships and personal relationships including as they relate to one's use of technology and social media.
4. Social networking must avoid inappropriate personal interaction.
5. Information of a confidential nature is not to be communicated via technology or social media.
6. Pictures, videos and all personal information are not to be shared or posted without prior consent of the individual and, in the case of a minor or vulnerable adult, consent of the parent of the minor or vulnerable adult.
7. Views expressed through technology and social media should always be made in a respectful manner with civility and Christian charity.
8. Be selective and cautious about visiting and participating in online sites, forums and groups.
9. Be aware that posted words, comments, images and videos can be easily misinterpreted.
10. Prior to administering an online presence on behalf of a diocesan parish/school/institution/entity, personnel must have the approval of the pastor and/or supervisor.

Guidelines for a Safe Environment for Minors

A. General Guidelines

1. Minors may never be offered alcoholic beverage, tobacco, drugs or anything else that is prohibited by law.
2. Avoid inappropriate conversation, vocabulary, recordings, films, or games with minors. Sexually explicit or pornographic material is never appropriate.
3. Do not take photographs of minors while they are unclothed or dressing.
4. Minors may not reside in the church rectory or other living quarters of the priest.
5. Only priests, seminarians, their immediate family members, or adults and staff of church or affiliated organizations may be overnight guests in rectories or cleric residences.
6. Adults should not be alone with a minor in a residence, sleeping facility, locker room, rest room, dressing facility, or other closed room or isolated area that is inappropriate to a ministry relationship.
7. If a person must go into a sleeping room with minors, a second adult must be present with them.
8. If a supervisor stays in a hotel or other sleeping room with minors, the supervisor should sleep in his or her own bed using a rollaway or cot if necessary.
9. Adults should not take an overnight trip alone with a minor who is not a member of their immediate family.
10. Touching another person should be age appropriate. Physical contact when alone with a minor should be avoided. If a minor initiates physical contact, an appropriate, limited response is proper. In all cases it must be respectful.
11. Hugging can be an expression of love and respect. However, hugging should always be done in the presence of others and never while alone in a room behind closed doors.
12. It is inappropriate to sit on one another's lap or to lay one's head on another's lap.
13. If you observe inappropriate personal or physical attraction between an adult and a minor or become aware of anyone (adult or minor) abusing a minor, take appropriate steps to immediately intervene and to provide a safe environment for the minor. Report the misconduct as soon as possible (see Reporting Procedure).
14. If you become aware of an inappropriate personal or physical attraction between yourself and a minor, maintain clear professional boundaries between yourself and the minor and consult with a supervisor.

15. If one-on-one pastoral care of a minor should be necessary, avoid meeting in isolated environments. Schedule meetings at times and use locations that create accountability. Limit both the length and number of sessions, and make appropriate referrals.
16. Discipline problems should be handled in coordination with supervisor and/or the parents of the minor. Be aware of the difference between physical restraint and physical abuse.
17. Church or school vehicles may not be driven without appropriate license and/or certification and unless prior authorization has been received.
18. Normally minors should not have keys to church facilities. If they need keys because of employment they should be carefully screened.

B. Guidelines for Chaperons & Supervisors of Minors at Group Activities

1. Chaperons/supervisors are responsible for reviewing the Diocese of Bismarck Code of Conduct and all related guidelines with the minors assigned to them.
2. Two or more adults must be present for events involving minors in high-risk settings. The recommended ratio for chaperons/supervisors to minors is 1:6. In the event a sufficient number of chaperons/supervisors are not available, the event must be cancelled.
3. Facilities must be monitored during all organization activities.
4. Children may be released only to a parent, guardian, or other person who has been authorized in writing to take custody of the minor(s).
5. Parental approval must be obtained before permitting children to participate in athletic events or any other activity that involves potential risk.
6. Dress must always be in keeping with modesty and Christian values.
7. An accountability system, similar to a “buddy system,” must be used whenever minors go on trips away from the original location of the activity.
8. Only qualified adult drivers may transport minors. Appropriate permission must be received and all proper insurance forms must be completed and approved by the authority of the organization. Forms and procedures are obtained from Catholic Mutual Group, the insurance provider for the Diocese of Bismarck.
9. Parental permission must be obtained, including a signed medical treatment form, before taking minors on trips. Do not administer medication of any kind without authorized written parental permission.
10. Adult participants are expected to refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages for the duration of the event, as well as during their travels to and from the event.

11. The possession or use of illegal drugs is strictly prohibited.
12. Weapons of all kinds are strictly prohibited.
13. No two minors should be alone in any area by themselves. One-on-one sharing or conversation must always be done within view of the large group.
14. If anyone is uncomfortable with actions or intentions of another during the trip, it should be reported to the chaperon/supervisor immediately.
15. Both adults and youth are expected to attend all activities with the entire group.
16. During all activities, especially a dance or other social event, chaperons should be available in the building where the activity takes place.
17. Groups of young people will be assigned a specific adult chaperon who will be responsible for their behavior throughout the event.
18. Chaperons/supervisors must make arrangements each day to check in with those entrusted to their care. This must be done in the morning, during the afternoon, and evening.
19. On any trip, information will be distributed to chaperons/supervisors for review with all participants to help familiarize them with the program schedule and layout of the facilities where event activities will take place. It is also a good time to be sure that the young people understand important safety information.
20. A specific location must be designated where minors will be able to locate their chaperon/supervisor or where the group will meet at an agreed upon time.
21. During overnight activities, chaperons/supervisors are responsible for establishing a curfew and for enforcing it.
22. Chaperons/supervisors must check rooms after curfew to make sure that young people are in their rooms and remain there.
23. Adults must not go anywhere during the event where the youth may not go with them. (e.g. cocktail lounges, bars, etc.)

Safe Environment Training for the Prevention of Child Abuse

Training Provides Answers to the Following Questions:

- A. What constitutes child abuse?
- B. What actions, procedures and policies are used to prevent child abuse in any form?
- C. What signs should an adult look for in a child who may be abused?
- D. What signs should an adult look for in a person who may be abusing a child in any way?
- E. What actions should an adult take when they believe that child abuse may be occurring?
- F. What are the laws and policies in North Dakota regarding the reporting of abuse?

What Constitutes Child Abuse?

Child abuse is an act by anyone that is not accidental and harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare.

Sexual abuse: At one end of the spectrum, sexual abuse includes sexual intercourse and/or its variations. These may only be the last step in a progressive pattern of sexual abuse. For that reason and because of their effects, exhibitionism, fondling and any other sexual contact with minors is also considered sexually abusive.

Other factors for sexual abuse could include personnel not providing for the protection from sexual abuse of a minor. Non-touching sexual abuse may include, but is not limited to:

- Indecent exposure/exhibitionism.
- Exposing children to pornographic material.
- Deliberately exposing a child to the act of sexual intercourse.
- Masturbation in the presence of a child.
- Making sexually provocative comments to a child.
- Child being harassed, encouraged, pressured or propositioned to perform sexually.
- Voyeurism.

Touching sexual abuse may include, but is not limited to:

- Fondling of private areas.
- Making a child touch another's sexual organs.
- Any penetration or attempt at penetration of a child's vagina, anus or mouth by a penis or any other object that doesn't have a valid medical purpose.

Sexual exploitation of a child may include, but is not limited to:

- Engaging a child or soliciting a child for the purposes of prostitution.
- Using a child in the recording, filming, photographing or as a model in the filming or photographing of pornographic material.
- Denying of age-appropriate privacy to a child.

Sexual activity between children should be considered a risk factor in most situations if coercion exists, or if one child is pre-pubescent and the other is post-pubescent. If the acts appear to be more sophisticated than age appropriate, consideration should be given to possible sexual victimization of at least one of these children by a third party.

Emotional abuse: Acts that impair a child's psychological growth and/or development. This often results in a negative self-concept and disturbed behavior. It is also defined as psychological consequences of patterns of behavior by a parent or guardian involving rejecting, isolating, threatening, ignoring, and/or exposing to negative influences, whether through acts of omission or commission. These acts are judged by a mixture of community values and professional expertise to be inappropriate or damaging.

(The definition of "neglect" in NDCC 50-25.1 is used when a decision is made that "Services are Required" and the Maltreatment Type is Psychological).

Emotional abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- Personnel consistently single out one child to use as a scapegoat, criticize or punish, or receive fewer rewards of praise.
- Personnel have consistent unrealistic expectations of achievement for the child that are shown by personnel criticizing, punishing, or condemning when the child does not achieve far above capabilities in school, sports, or social status.
- Personnel regularly denigrate and belittle the child, stating that the child is different and unacceptable, or that the child reminds everyone of a person who is unacceptable.
- Personnel don't allow the child physical contact, nurturing.
- Faults and shortcomings of a child are clearly overemphasized.
- Criticism/disapproval is disproportional to actual behavior or used in an unfair and inconsistent way.
- Personnel use excessive threats of punishment in an attempt to control the child.

Physical abuse: Acts that result in physical injury such as bruises, welts, scars, fractures, burns, lacerations, and abrasions. These acts often happen in the name of discipline.

Risk factors for physical abuse include, but are not limited to:

- Physically punishing an infant.
- Shaking an infant or preschooler.
- Striking children with an object or one's hand.
- Throwing children in such a manner that there is risk of injury.
- Kicking a child.
- Biting a child.
- Forcing a child to ingest a noxious substance, i.e. tobacco, alcohol, soap, pepper, tabasco sauce, etc.
- Force-feeding.

Personnel have the right to physically restrain or move a minor in a manner that does not subject the minor to injury. Personnel should only use force in self-defense or to prevent harm to the minor.

Child Sexual Abusers Manipulate Their Victims!

Child sexual abusers can make the child extremely fearful of telling, and only when a special effort has helped the child to feel safe, can the child talk freely.

If a child says that he or she has been molested, parents should try to remain calm and reassure the child that what happened was not their fault. Parents should seek a medical examination and psychiatric consultation.

Parents can prevent or lessen the chance of sexual abuse by:

- Telling children that “If someone tries to touch your body and do things that make you feel funny, say no to that person and tell me right away.”
- Teaching children that respect does not mean blind obedience to adults and to authority, for example, don’t tell children to, “always do everything the teacher or baby-sitter tells you to do.”
- Encouraging professional prevention programs in the local school system.

Sexually abused children and their families need immediate professional evaluation and treatment. (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry – 11/98)

Possible Indications of Sexual Abuse in Children

- Unusual interest in or avoidance of all things of a sexual nature.
- Sleep problems or nightmares.
- Depression or withdrawal from friends or family.
- Seductiveness.
- Statements that their bodies are dirty or damaged, or fear that there is something wrong with them in the genital area.
- Refusal to go to school.
- Delinquency/conduct problems
- Secretiveness.
- Aspects of sexual molestation in drawings, games, fantasies.
- Unusual aggressiveness, or suicidal behavior. (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry 11/98)

Warning Signs of a Sexual Predator

The following list describes some signs that a person might be a sexual predator:

- Insists on hugging, touching, kissing, tickling, wrestling with, or holding a child even when the child does not want this affection.
- Is overly interested in the sexuality of a particular child or teen (e.g., talks repeatedly about a child’s developing body or interferes with normal teen dating).
- Manages to get time alone or insists on time alone with a child with no interruptions, such as weekend sleepovers, vacations, or camping trips.
- Spends most of his or her spare time with children or teens and has little interest in spending time with someone his or her own age.
- Regularly offers to baby-sit or takes children on outings alone.
- Buys children and teens expensive gifts or gives them money for no apparent reason.

- Frequently walks in on children or teens in the bathroom.
- Allows children or teens to consistently get away with inappropriate behaviors.

(Material taken from “Creating Safe and Sacred Places, Identifying, Preventing and Healing Sexual Abuse” St. Mary’s Press, Winona, MN)

What To Do If You Become Aware of or Suspect Child Abuse

When a child tells someone about sexual abuse, a supportive, caring response is the first step in getting help for the child and reestablishing their trust in adults.

1. Report any suspicion of child abuse. If you suspect or are aware of child abuse by a cleric, report it to the chancellor of the Diocese of Bismarck – phone: 701-223-1347 – and to the local county child protection agency or protective services division.
2. If you suspect or are aware of child abuse by any parish personnel or parish volunteers, report it to your local pastor and to the local county child protection agency or protective services division.
3. Any other suspected cases of child abuse should be reported to the local county child protection agency or protective services division and/or the local police department.
4. The agency receiving the report will conduct an evaluation and will take action to protect the child.
5. Parents should consult with their pediatrician or family physician who may refer them to a physician who specializes in evaluating and treating sexual abuse. The examining doctor will evaluate the child’s condition and treat any physical problem related to the abuse, gather evidence to help protect the child, and reassure the child that he or she is all right.
6. Children who have been sexually abused should have an evaluation by a child and adolescent psychiatrist or other qualified mental health professional. This process will help the experts to find out how the sexual abuse has affected them, and to determine whether ongoing professional help is necessary for the child to deal with the trauma of the abuse. The child and adolescent psychiatrist can also provide support to other family members who may be upset by the abuse.

(American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. 11/99 Five Basic Principles in Dealing with Accusations of Sexual Abuse)

Responding to Child Sexual Abuse

When a child tells an adult that he or she has been sexually abused, the adult may feel uncomfortable and many not know what to say or do. The following guidelines should be used when responding to children who say they have been sexually abused:

What to say if a child even hints in a vague way that sexual abuse has occurred:

- Encourage him or her to talk freely. Don’t make judgmental comments.
- Show that you understand and take seriously what the child is saying.
- Child and adolescent psychiatrists have found that children who are listened to and understood do much better than those who are not. The response to the disclosure of sexual abuse is critical to the child’s ability to resolve and heal the trauma of sexual abuse.
- Assure the child that they did the right thing in telling.

A child who is close to the abuser may feel guilty about revealing the secret. The child may feel frightened if the abuser has threatened to harm the child or other family members as punishment for telling the secret.

- Tell the child that he or she is not to blame for the sexual abuse:

Most children in attempting to make sense out of the abuse will believe that somehow they caused it or may even view it as a form of punishment for imagined or real wrong doings.

- Offer the child protection, and promise that you will promptly take steps to see that the abuse stops.

How Do I Determine the Right Kind of Relationships and What Are Signs of Abuse?

(Chapters 5 and 7 of “Sexuality and Relationships in Teen to Teen: Responding to Peers in Crisis” by Bob McCarty and published by St. Mary’s Press)

One of the most important factors for preventing abusive experiences and relationships is educating young people on the signs and characteristics of “right” relationships and those that are “not right.” “Right” relationships foster the personal, spiritual, and emotional growth of both persons.

The qualities of healthy relationships include, but are not limited to the following:

- Ability to communicate. To be able to talk about anything; sharing feelings, dreams, hopes, and fears; to know that the other person is really listening.
- Ability to show affection. To be able to express one’s feelings and show that one cares about the other by the way one treats him or her.
- Forgiveness. To be able to forgive the mistakes of the other; to be able to trust in the forgiveness offered by the other and let the past go; to not hold a grudge.
- Honesty. To be able to be truthful about everything, including feelings.
- Vulnerability. To feel comfortable being one’s self; to let down one’s guard; to be able to risk being known personally and honestly; to feel safe.
- Dependability. To be there for each other when needed; to keep commitments.
- Humor. To be able to relax, laugh, and have fun together.
- Romance. To be able to be romantic without pressuring the other into an uncomfortable physical relationship.
- Patience. To realize that relationships go through rough times, but that doesn’t mean the relationship is poor; to be willing to work through rough times.
- Freedom. To not be possessive or jealous; to feel comfortable about the other having friends; to be able to spend time apart.

Relationships that are “not right” are obviously very different from “right” relationships. Often they may seem at the beginning like healthy relationships, but after the initial ‘honeymoon’ stage of the relationship is over, they become harmful and hurtful.

Abuse occurs when someone does not respect another's boundaries; uses power, tricks, threats, or violence to cross or change another's boundaries; or inflicts hurtful or unwanted behavior (physical, verbal, emotional or sexual) on another person. According to the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, abuse in relationships can take various forms:

- Emotional Abuse: Putting down the person, making the person feel bad about him/herself, excessive criticism.
- Coercion and Threats: Making or carrying out threats to do something physically hurtful, threatening to expose embarrassing secrets.
- Sexual Abuse: Coercing a person to engage in sexual acts against her or his will, physically attacking the sexual parts of one's body, treating a person like a sexual object.
- Economic Abuse: Destroying one's property, using money or gifts as leverage in return for sexual favors.
- Isolation: Maintaining surveillance, controlling what a person does or who a person sees or talks to.
- Blaming, Denying: Refusing to accept responsibility for abusive behavior, blaming the victim for causing the abuse.
- Intimidation: Acts designed to frighten a person such as frightening gestures, displaying weapons, smashing objects, driving crazily.

Although violence and abuse have numerous causes, underlying or accompanying many of these is the abuser's need for power and control. Often times, the victims of abuse appear as a threat to that need or serve as a scapegoat to fill that need.

To the abuser, violence may often appear to be acceptable behavior for maintaining power and control over others. Being in control may seem to increase self-esteem, reinforce an individual's beliefs about masculinity or femininity, or relieve the feelings of loss of control in other areas of the abuser's life.

Date rape is a prevalent form of dating violence to which many young people are exposed. The abuser is a product of deep-seated problems that do not make him or her an evil person, but do make him or her a person in need of professional help. In an abusive relationship, the immediate concern is the person being abused and how to enable that person to break the cycle of abuse in order to prevent it from occurring again.

There is also a secondary concern for the abuser and enabling that person to receive the help they need to change their pattern of behavior. It is not uncommon for a victim of abuse to experience some of the following: fear, guilt, shame, loneliness, anger, rage, denial, repression, self-punishment, alcohol and drug abuse, continued involvement in abusive relationships, an unhealthy view of sex, a loss of faith, or fear in seeking help. The reaction of other family members may not be much different and may demonstrate a lack of knowing how to respond appropriately to a victim of abuse.

How to Bring a Complaint

An individual who has a complaint regarding sexual misconduct by a person subject to this policy is urged to report the allegations immediately. Written forms are available from the Chancery in Bismarck, any parish within the Diocese of Bismarck or bismarckdiocese.com. Complaints may be made to the chancellor or vicar general at the Chancery in Bismarck, North Dakota, at 701-223-1347 or to any of the civil authorities listed below.

1. If the victim is a minor at the time the complaint is received, the Diocese shall report the matter to the Child Protective Services Division of the Social Services Department in the county where the minor is located.
2. If the victim was a minor at the time of the alleged sexual misconduct but has reached the age of majority by the time the complaint is received, the Diocese shall report the matter to the North Dakota Child Protection Program, North Dakota Department of Human Services, Judicial Wing, 3rd Floor, 600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck, ND 58505-0250, Phone: (701) 328-2310; Toll Free: (800) 472-2622.
3. If the victim is a vulnerable adult, the Diocese may report the matter to the local Regional Human Service Center of the North Dakota Department of Human Services or an appropriate law enforcement agency.
4. If the victim is not a minor and is not a vulnerable adult, the Diocese may report the matter to an appropriate law enforcement agency.

In each instance, the Diocese shall conduct its own investigation or, if deemed appropriate, rely on the results provided by the investigating agency.

The chancellor or vicar general will notify the person against whom the allegation has been made and advise the accused of his/her rights under civil law and / or canon law.



Diocese of Bismarck Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Form

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the Diocese of Bismarck Code of Conduct.

I agree to abide by all guidelines presented within the Code of Conduct and to assist where possible in the prevention of child abuse and maintain a safe environment for minors.

I agree that it is my responsibility to read, understand, and implement any future amendments to the Code of Conduct when communicated to me by the Diocese of Bismarck.

I understand that the Code of Conduct is available through the Diocese of Bismarck, a parish or school within the Diocese of Bismarck or online at bismarckdiocese.com.

I understand that this acknowledgment form will be kept on file in my personnel or volunteer file, and that it will be made available to the Diocese of Bismarck upon request.

Print Name (clearly): _____

Parish: _____

City: _____

Ministry Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Effective July 2014