

**DIOCESE OF MARQUETTE**  
**CODE OF ETHICAL STANDARDS**  
**FOR MINISTRY TO MINORS**

**PREFACE**

The diocese is pleased to present this *Code of Ethical Standards for Ministry to Minors in the Diocese of Marquette* to all Church personnel and volunteers in the diocese. After much study and consultation, the diocese is providing this Code of Ethical Standards to all those who serve as leaders and ministers in the Church: priests, religious men and women, deacons, school personnel, catechists, and volunteers who work with children. As personnel and volunteers in a Church that sets high moral standards for its members, we have the responsibility to lead by example.

The priests and other Church personnel and volunteers in our diocese strive to be professional, compassionate, holy, effective ministers. The diocese is continually impressed by their talent and generosity. This Code of Ethical Standards will support all of you in ministry as you continue to strive toward excellence. By following its protocol, you will know that you are doing what is right in your interaction with children.

The diocese is deeply grateful to the members of the Priests' Council, Diocesan Office Department Directors, and all those who have been consulted for assistance and contributions to this important and significant effort. The diocese is sure that this document will be subject to revision after some experience of putting it into practice. It is the responsibility of appropriate supervisors to see to it that these standards of ministry governing the interaction of adults and children be implemented at the parish and school level.

The purpose for publishing this Code of Ethical Standards for our diocese is important: to protect our Church personnel and volunteers from the slightest suggestion of inappropriate behavior and to witness to the commitment our local Church has to ensure the safety of the children entrusted to it. As personnel and volunteers in the Church, we all want to follow the mandates of the Gospel, the norms of Church and Civil Law, and always strive to do what is ethically right in the eyes of our contemporary society. It is hoped that this Code of Ethical Standards will help us to do just that.

August 2003

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**PREAMBLE**

As personnel and volunteers in the Church founded by Christ, priests, deacons, and lay ministers within our parishes and institutions must always seek to uphold Christian values and conduct. In addition to following the Gospel and its mandates, they will want to act properly at all times in the light of contemporary society and its needs. This Code of Ethics does not presume to provide the answer to all the ethical questions facing Church personnel and volunteers. What it does establish is a set of general ethical standards and boundaries when ministering to minors.

The following Code of Ethics is applicable to all persons employed by or volunteering in any of the parishes and institutions of the Diocese of Marquette. So that it is clear who must be aware of the contents of this document, the following persons are being addressed: priests, religious (men and women), deacons, pastoral coordinators, school/program administrators, teachers, catechists, youth ministers, support staff, coaches, school program volunteers, and seminarians serving internships. In effect, it applies to all diocesan, parish and school staff and volunteers who have regular contact with children, and its observance is considered to be mandatory for those affected.

This Code of Ethics has been developed to help create a safe, appropriate, and Christian environment for minors and their relationships with adults involved in Church ministry.

**BACKGROUND**

This Code of Ethics was written and published in 1997. It was developed in cooperation with the Marquette Diocesan Priests' Council with the assistance of codes and protocol documents from other dioceses and archdioceses. It was disseminated to all the Priest Council Representatives for the purpose of deanery review and comment. Since its first publication in July of 1997, the Code of Ethical Standards was revised in August of 2003 in light of the U.S. Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. The main intent of that revision was to strengthen the requirements to observe certain standards of ministerial behavior when working with minors. This latest revision is to be considered the current official policy of the Diocese of Marquette.

Responsibility for adherence to this Code of Ethical Standards rests with the Church personnel and volunteers themselves. It is anticipated however, that disregard of this code by Church personnel and volunteers will be dealt with by the appropriate employing/appointing organization (e.g. the parish, the religious order, the diocesan

bishop). Remedial action may take various forms from counseling to removal from ministry.

The conduct of Church personnel and volunteers, both public and private, has the potential to inspire and motivate people, or scandalize and tear down their faith. They must be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their ministry. They must also know that God's goodness and graces support them in their ministry.

## **ETHICAL STANDARDS WITH REGARD TO THE MINISTRY TO MINORS**

*Church personnel and volunteers working with youth must use appropriate judgment to insure an open and trustworthy relationship.*

- 1.1 Minors must always be viewed - whether in a social or ministerial situation - as the restricted individuals they are, that is, they are not independent. Wherever they are and whatever they do must be with the explicit knowledge of the parents or guardians. Also, they are subject to specific civil laws in their own proper state and city which may prohibit certain activities. They are not adults and are not permitted unfettered decisions. Any and all involvement must be approached from this premise.
- 1.2 Caution and professional attitudes are to be observed in all interactions with minors.
- 1.3 An adult must attempt never to be alone with a minor in the rectory, parish residence, school, or in a closed room.
- 1.4 In meeting and or pastoral counseling situations involving a minor, excluding Sacramental Reconciliation, the presence or proximity of another adult is required. However, in those situations where the presence of another adult is not usual or practical (e.g. piano lessons, disciplinary meeting with an administrator, etc.) another adult must be informed that the meeting will be taking place and the doorway must be left open.
- 1.5 A minor is allowed only in the professional section of a rectory or parish residence, not in the living quarters.
- 1.6 Minors are permitted to work in the rectory, parish residence, school or parish facility, only when there are at least two (2) adults present in the building.
- 1.7 An adult must not engage in games or other sport activities with one minor unless a second adult is present.

- 1.8 A group of minors may not engage in organized games or sports activities when there is only one adult present. At least two (2) adults must be present.
- 1.9 An adult must try to avoid being the only adult in a bathroom, shower room, locker room or other dressing areas whenever minors are using such facilities.
- 1.10 Youth group trips must have a minimum of two (2) adult chaperones. Larger groups must have at least one (1) adult chaperone for every ten (10) minors.
- 1.11 While on youth trips, the adults must maintain a professional stature and socialize appropriately with minors.
- 1.12 One (1) adult may never engage in an overnight trip with a minor or minors.
- 1.13 While on youth group trips, clergy may never stay alone overnight in the same motel/hotel room with a minor or minors.
- 1.14 Adults must take care to avoid the risk of a minor's developing a dependency on them in the place of the minor's parent/guardian, becoming a father and/or mother figure to a minor.
- 1.15 The sacristy door must always be open whenever minors are present within the sacristy.
- 1.16 Comments of a sexual nature must not be made to any minor except in response to specific classroom or otherwise legitimate questions from a minor.
- 1.17 Topics or vocabulary such as profanity, cursing, and vulgar humor which could not comfortably be used in the presence of parents/guardians or another adult, must not be utilized in the presence of a minor/minors.
- 1.18 Adults are absolutely prohibited from serving or supplying alcohol or controlled substances to minors. Nor may alcoholic beverages be served or consumed by adults at parish or school social activities for minors.
- 1.19 Reflection on the words of Jesus Christ regarding children is a healthy meditation before any involvement with a minor/minors, and a salutary reflection and examination after each involvement. (Mt. 18:6, Mk. 9:42, Lk. 17:2, Mk. 10:13-16)

## **ETHICAL STANDARDS WITH REGARD TO THE PASTORAL COUNSELING OF MINORS**

*Church personnel and volunteers who conduct pastoral counseling for families, individuals, or groups, must respect their rights and advance the welfare of each person.*

- 2.1 Pastoral counseling of a minor must take place only in the professional portion of a rectory or parish residence, never in the living quarters.
- 2.2 The Sacrament of Reconciliation must be celebrated in a place so designated for that purpose: a reconciliation chapel or confessional. Only extreme inconvenience or impossibility would be an acceptable excuse to deviate from this standard.
- 2.3 Office or classroom doors must have a window, or be left open during pastoral counseling.
- 2.4 If at all possible, another adult must be in close proximity during any counseling session.
- 2.5 Unless the subject matter precludes their presence or knowledge, parents or guardians of minors must be made aware of the counseling session.
- 2.6 The relationship between an adult and minor must always remain professional during the counseling session.
- 2.7 An adult must try to recognize any personal/physical attraction to or from a minor. In such a situation, the minor must be immediately referred to another qualified adult or licensed professional.
- 2.8 If counseling is expected to extend beyond two (2) sessions, evaluation of the situation must be made with the parents or guardians, an advisor, or licensed professional.
- 2.9 Careful and appropriate boundaries concerning physical contact with a minor must be observed at all times.

By means of this general decree, I hereby establish the above code as particular law within the ecclesiastical region of the Diocese of Marquette and as binding upon the faithful of the same Diocese of Marquette, according to the norms of the Code of Canon Law (1983).

August 31, 2003

Date

Most Reverend James H. Garland  
Bishop of Marquette

Reverend Alex K. Sample  
Ecclesiastical Notary

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