

### **C. Conduct with Minors.**

1. Church workers working with minors shall use appropriate judgment to ensure trusting relationships marked by personal and professional integrity. Interaction with youth and children should be age appropriate.

a. Church workers must be aware of their own vulnerability and that of any individual minor with whom they may be working. In every instance possible, a team approach to youth ministry activities shall be considered. Church workers shall avoid establishing an exclusive relationship with a minor and exercise due caution when they become aware of a minor desiring a relationship. Both the participants and members of the diocesan, parish or school community can misunderstand such relationships.

b. Physical contact with minors can be misconstrued by both minors and other adults, and should occur only under appropriate public circumstances. Touching must be age-appropriate and based on the need of the young person, not the need of the adult. 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.

c. Priests and deacons vowed to celibacy are prohibited from adopting children, from serving as foster parents, from hosting foreign exchange students and from providing overnight accommodations for minors in rectories or other personal residences, other than those who are members of their immediate family.

d. Church workers must not use or supply alcohol and/or illegal drugs when working with minors.

e. Church workers must not provide any sexually explicit, inappropriate, or offensive material to minors. Topics, vocabulary, recordings, films, games, computer software, or any other forms of personal interaction or entertainment that could not be used comfortably in the presence of parents must not be used with minors. Pornographic material is prohibited.

f. Church workers shall know and understand diocesan policies and procedures concerning allegations of sexual misconduct involving minors.

g. Church workers will be held to a policy of zero tolerance in regard to substantiated sexual abuse of minors.

h. Engaging in physical discipline of a minor is unacceptable. Discipline situations are to be handled according to diocesan, parish or school policy.

i. Church workers shall not be alone with minors in areas inappropriate to a ministry relationship.

j. Church workers are prohibited from taking overnight trips alone with a minor who is not a member of their immediate family.

k. Church workers must never share beds with anyone except their spouse, if they have one. If attending a diocesan, parish or school event that requires a stay in a hotel, the adult shall never sleep in a room alone with a single child. If supervision is needed for a number of minors staying overnight in a room, the adult should get parental permission to sleep in the same room, and more than one adult is to stay in the room with the minors.

l. Before a Church worker administers medication to a minor, a signed parental authorization must be obtained from the parent or guardian.

m. If inappropriate personal or physical attraction develops between a Church worker and a minor, the adult is responsible for maintaining clear professional boundaries.

n. If one-on-one pastoral care of a minor should be necessary, avoid meeting in isolated environments. Schedule the meetings at times and locations that provide for clear accountability. Limit both the length and number of sessions, and make appropriate referrals. Notify parent of the meetings.

o. Taking photos of minors while they are unclothed or in the process of dressing is prohibited.

p. Prior to any planned discussion or session on human sexuality, Church workers are to send a communication to parents who then have the option to withdraw their child from the session. If parents do not want their child to participate, their signed consent shall be obtained.

2. Chaperones and supervisors of minors at group activities shall act to promote a safe environment for minors.

a. Chaperones/supervisors are responsible for reviewing the Diocese of Fargo Code of Conduct and all related guidelines.

b. During all activities, especially a dance or other social event, two or more chaperones should be available in the building where the activity takes place. The number of chaperones must be sufficient for the type of activity that is taking place.

c. Facilities must be monitored during all organization activities.

d. Children may be released only to a parent, guardian, or other person who has been authorized to take custody of the minor(s). A chaperone/supervisor must remain on site to ensure that all children have transportation home.

e. Parental approval must be obtained, including a signed parental authorization form, before permitting children to participate in trips, athletic events or any other activity that involves potential risk. (Contact the diocesan Youth and Young Adult Ministry office for a parental authorization form.)

f. Dress must always be in keeping with modesty and Christian values.

g. An accountability system, similar to a “buddy system,” must be used whenever minors go on trips away from the original location of the activity. At the same time, chaperones and supervisors must be sensitive to boundaries involved with personal sharing times. One-on-one sharing or conversation must always be done within view of the others.

h. 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 can be obtained from the Diocese of Fargo Finance and Administration Offices. (See the Vehicle Safety Policy.)

i. 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.

j. The possession or use of illegal drugs is strictly prohibited.

k. Weapons of all kinds are strictly prohibited.

l. If anyone is uncomfortable with actions or intentions of another during the trip/event, it should be reported to the chaperone/supervisor immediately.

m. While on trips, groups of minors will be assigned a specific adult chaperone who will be responsible for supervising their behavior throughout the event.

n. Chaperones/supervisors must make arrangements each day to check in with those entrusted to their care.

o. On any trip, information will be distributed to chaperones/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. This is also a good time to be sure that the minors understand important safety information.

p. A specific location must be designated where minors will be able to locate their chaperone/supervisor or where the group will meet at an agreed upon time.

q. During overnight activities, chaperones/supervisors are responsible for establishing a curfew and for enforcing it.

r. Chaperones/supervisors must check rooms after curfew to make sure that minors are in their rooms and remain there.

s. Sleeping arrangements will never include members of the opposite sex in the same room, unless these are immediate family members.

t. Adults must not go anywhere during the event where the youth may not go with them (e.g. cocktail lounges, bars, etc.)

**D. Sexual Conduct.** Church workers shall not exploit the trust of the diocesan, parish or school community for sexual gain or intimacy.

1. Church workers must never exploit a person for sexual purposes.

2. It is the personal and professional obligation of the Church worker to be knowledgeable about what constitutes sexual exploitation of another and to be familiar with the laws of the State of North Dakota and the Code of Conduct, including the Sexual Misconduct Policy, regarding sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, and sexual assault.

3. Church workers should be knowledgeable of the State of North Dakota Child Abuse laws and know the proper reporting requirements. Church workers will also comply with all internal and external reporting requirements of sexual misconduct and child abuse. In order to witness to Catholic values and social teachings, Church workers must report, even if not required to report by state law. However, if the information was received by a member of the clergy in the capacity of spiritual advisor no reporting can occur.

4. Church workers who have made a commitment to celibacy are called to witness this in all relationships. Likewise, those who have made a marital commitment are called to witness to this fidelity in all their relationships.

5. Any allegations of sexual misconduct will be taken seriously and reported according to the *Policy Regarding Sexual Misconduct*, Section 5.