



# DIOCESE OF FRESNO CODE OF CONDUCT



## SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

*The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops requires:

- All employees and volunteers, who work regularly with children, to be cleared through a background evaluation conducted by the Diocesan Department of Human Resources.
- Participation in the safe environment training, *Creating Safe Environments for Our Children and Ourselves*, or online training at an approved website, or viewing *KidSafety of America* video training program.
- Acceptance of and sign off on the Diocese of Fresno *Code of Conduct*.

Parishes and schools will maintain a record of compliance of all three mandatory elements. These records for clergy, employees, and volunteers will be maintained in a confidential space.

## CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MINISTERS

The Diocese of Fresno developed the following Code of Conduct for ministers in the Diocese of Fresno. **In this Code of Conduct clergy, employees, and volunteers are considered ministers.** The Diocese requires all clergy, employees, and volunteers to acknowledge receipt of the document, understand the document, and comply with the document by signing and dating this Code of Conduct.

### Professional Ethical Obligations

#### ***1. Ministerial Role***

- a) Ministers work collaboratively with all those engaged in ministry.
- b) Ministers faithfully represent the teachings of the Catholic Church with integrity in word and action.
- c) Ministers are competent and receive ongoing education and training commensurate with their role(s) and responsibilities.

#### ***2. Inclusion***

- a) Ministers recognize the dignity of each person.
- b) Ministers serve all people without regard to gender, creed, national origin, age, marital status, socio-economic status, or political beliefs.
- c) Ministers ensure that all persons with special needs have reasonable accommodations.

#### ***3. Accountability***

- a) Priests are accountable to the Bishop of the Diocese of Fresno or the person he designates; all other ministers are accountable to the pastor, principal, or other duly appointed representative under the authority of the Bishop of the Diocese of Fresno.
- b) Ministers are called to serve the faith community, carrying out their ministerial functions "... conscientiously, zealously, and diligently".
- c) Ministers exercise responsible stewardship of resources while holding themselves to the highest standards of integrity regarding the fiscal matters placed in their trust.
- d) Ministers are responsible for supporting each other toward being effective leaders. This support must include discussing concerns about inappropriate

behaviors concerning children, youth, or vulnerable adults with the particular minister and/or minister's supervisor.

#### ***4. Confidentiality***

- a) Ministers respect confidentiality when appropriate except in a Mandated Reporting situation, threats of suicide, or in response to acts of violence to self, others, or property.
- b) Ministers adhere to civil law concerning the reporting of neglect or abuse or whenever physical harm could come to children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- c) Ministers support the rights and roles of parents, guardians, and caretakers while ministering to the needs and concerns of children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

#### ***5. Conduct***

- a) Ministers will sustain respectful relationships with all those they serve, avoiding sexual harassment and other abuses of power.
- b) Ministers maintain appropriate professional boundaries with colleagues. Romantic or sexual relationships between a minister and a child, youth, or vulnerable adult are inappropriate and unethical, regardless of who initiates the conduct.
- c) Ministers must model healthy and positive behaviors with all children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- d) Procuring, providing, or using alcohol and/or controlled substances for or with children, youth, or vulnerable adults is prohibited.

#### ***6. Referrals and Intervention***

- a) Ministers should be aware of the signs of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse and neglect.
- b) Ministers should be aware of their limitations and make appropriate counseling referrals.
- c) Ministers should adhere to civil and ecclesial law, policy, and procedure for reporting child, youth, or vulnerable adult abuse, suspected abuse, or neglect.

#### ***7. Parish/School /Diocesan Policies and Guidelines***

- a) Ministers should be aware of and comply with all applicable parish/school, organizational and/or diocesan policies and guidelines with special attention to ministerial competency, sexual misconduct, safety, transportation, and parental permission.

### **Behavior Standards**

1. Any verbal or nonverbal sexual behavior with any child, youth, or vulnerable adult is inappropriate and forbidden.
2. All reasonable suspicions of child or sexual abuse must be reported as required by state law and diocesan policies. Any knowledge or suspicion of any minister, employee, or volunteer having an inappropriate relationship with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult must be reported immediately to that person's supervisor and to a representative of the Bishop's Sensitive Claim Committee.
3. All observed violations of this Code of Conduct must be reported to a supervisor and documented.
4. Dating any child, youth, or vulnerable adult is forbidden.
5. Discretion must be used in dealing with all, especially regarding physical contact. Any overt display of affection should be made in a public setting in front of others and should respect the wishes of the other person.
6. If a child, youth, or vulnerable adult makes sexual gestures or overtures to a minister it should be reported to the minister's supervisor so that discussion of this

behavior can be held with the child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

7. The “Buddy System” should be used by ministers whenever possible, especially when children, youth, or vulnerable adults are involved. Two adults or one adult and one teen are required in all religious education programs, classes and activities. This includes all activities for children and all youth ministry events and activities. Please note, that an adult must always be certain that all interaction/planning meetings with a teen assistant/helper must take place in public or in the presence of another adult or teen. Teens helpers must always be supervised by an adult that meets all Safe Environment requirements.
8. One-to-one communication with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult should occur in a public setting.
9. Driving alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult should be avoided at all times.
10. Two adults should be present until all children/youth have left the premises.
11. Never swear or use foul or abusive language in the presence of those you serve in ministry.
12. Never speak graphically about sexual activities, including your own, and do not allow others to do so.
13. Never show pornographic materials to those you serve in ministry.
14. Never use your role to degrade, ridicule, or threaten another person.
15. Never give children, youth, or vulnerable adults tobacco, alcohol, or unauthorized drugs.
16. Never allow children, youth, or vulnerable adults to become sexual with one another during ministry activities.
17. Never invite or host children, youth, or vulnerable adults in your home unless another adult is present.
18. Never spank, shake, slap or physically punish children, youth or vulnerable adults.
19. Never use, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while ministering to children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
20. Never use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
21. Never wrestle with or tickle a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
22. All behavior standards also apply to electronic media, including internet access, email, chat rooms, and phone conversations.

***Unacceptable behaviors:***

- Meeting alone in isolated places.
- Physical contact that can be misinterpreted.
- Sexually provocative or revealing attire.
- Meeting in homes without others present.
- Being nude in front of children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- Sleeping in bed with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- Failing to adhere to uniform or accepted standards of affection.
- Taking pictures while others are dressing or showering.
- Showing favoritism.
- Commenting on others’ bodies.

***Warning signs in relationships between adults and children, youth, or vulnerable adults:***

- Spending extra time grooming yourself when you know you’re going to see a certain person.
- Finding ways or reasons to be alone with a certain person.
- Keeping aspects of your relationship with a person secret from others (such as how often you talk on the phone or see each other alone).
- Giving and receiving special gifts from a certain person.
- Sharing personal information or seeking help with personal problems from a certain

- child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
- Fantasizing or daydreaming about a certain person.

***Inappropriate displays of Affection in Ministry:***

- Any form of unwanted affection.
- Touching bottoms, chests, or genital areas.
- Massages.
- Tickling or wrestling.
- Games involving inappropriate touching.
- Compliments that relate to physique or body development.
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, restricted areas, or other private rooms.
- Kisses on the mouth
- Lying down or sleeping beside others.
- Patting others on the thigh, knee or leg.
- Touching or hugging from behind.

Remember part of your responsibilities in ministry are to communicate when you have concerns about others serving in your ministry as well as yourself.

**Violations of The Code for Ministers, Employees, and Volunteers which involve minors or vulnerable adults, are grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.**

**I have read and understand the above Code of Conduct for Ministers, Employees, and Volunteers and commit to uphold this code in my ministry.**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Print Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parish/School:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_