

# St. Patrick Parish & School Code of Pastoral Conduct

For Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Ministers,  
Administrators, Staff, and Volunteers

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## I. Preamble

Priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, administrators, staff, and volunteers in our parishes, religious communities/institutes, and organizations must uphold Christian values and conduct. The *Code of Pastoral Conduct for Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Ministers, Administrators, Staff, and Volunteers* provides a set of standards for conduct in certain pastoral situations.

## II. Responsibility

The public and private conduct of clergy, staff, and volunteers can inspire and motivate people, but it can also scandalize and undermine the people's faith. Clergy, staff, and volunteers must, at all times, be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work. They must also know that God's goodness and grace supports them in their ministry.

Responsibility for adherence to the *Code of Pastoral Conduct* rests with the individual. Clergy, staff, and volunteers who disregard this *Code of Pastoral Conduct* will be subject to remedial action by St. Patrick Parish, School and the Diocese of Columbus. Corrective action may take various forms—from a verbal reproach to removal from the ministry—depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm.

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## 2. Confidentiality

*Information disclosed to a Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director during the course of counseling, advising, or spiritual direction shall be held in the strictest confidence possible.*

- 2.1 Information obtained in the course of sessions shall be confidential, except for compelling professional reasons or as required by law.
  - 2.1.1 If there is clear and imminent danger to the client or to others, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director may disclose only the information necessary to protect the parties affected and to prevent harm.
  - 2.1.2 Before disclosure is made, if feasible, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director should inform the person being counseled about the disclosure and the potential consequences.
- 2.2 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors should discuss the nature of confidentiality and its limitations with each person in counseling.
- 2.3 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors should keep minimal records of the content of sessions.
- 2.4 Knowledge that arises from professional contact may be used in teaching, writing, homilies, or other public presentations only when effective measures are taken to absolutely safeguard both the individual's identity and the confidentiality of the disclosures.
- 2.5 While counseling a minor, if a Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director discovers that there is a serious threat to the welfare of the minor and that communication of confidential information to a parent or legal guardian is essential to the child's health and well-being, the Counselor or Spiritual Director should:
  - Attempt to secure written consent from the minor for the specific disclosure.
  - If consent is not given, disclose only the information necessary to protect the health and well-being of the minor.

Consultation with the appropriate Church supervisory personnel is required before disclosure.

**These obligations are independent of the confidentiality of the confessional. Under no circumstances whatsoever can there be any disclosure—even indirect disclosure—of information received through the confessional.**

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## **4. Sexual Conduct**

*Clergy, staff, and volunteers must not, for sexual gain or intimacy, exploit the trust placed in them by the faith community.*

- 4.1 Clergy, religious, staff, and volunteers who are committed to a celibate lifestyle are called to be an example of celibate chastity in all relationships at all times.
- 4.2 Staff and volunteers who provide pastoral counseling or spiritual direction services must avoid developing inappropriately intimate relationships with minors, other staff, or parishioners. Staff and volunteers must behave in a professional manner at all times.
- 4.3 No clergy, staff, or volunteer may exploit another person for sexual purposes.
- 4.4 Allegations of sexual misconduct should be taken seriously and reported to the appropriate person in the parish, community/institute, diocese, or organization and to civil authorities if the situation involves a minor.

St. Patrick Parish and School procedures will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.

- 4.5 Clergy, staff, and volunteers should review and know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the state of Ohio and should follow those mandates.

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### 6. Parish, Religious Community/Institute, and Organizational Records and Information

*Confidentiality will be maintained in creating, storing, accessing, transferring, and disposing of parish, religious community/institute, or organizational records.*

- 6.1 Sacramental records shall be regarded as confidential. When compiling and publishing parish, religious community/institute, or organization statistical information from these records, great care must be taken to preserve the anonymity of individuals.
- 6.2 Most sacramental records older than 70 years are open to the public.
  - 6.2.1 Information regarding adoption and legitimacy remains confidential, regardless of age.
  - 6.2.2 Only staff members who are authorized to access the records and supervise their use shall handle requests for more recent records.
- 6.3 Parish, religious community/institute, or organization financial records are confidential unless review is required by the diocese, a supervising institution or an appropriate government agency. Contact the financial oversight department of the diocese or supervising institution upon receipt of any request for release of financial records.
- 6.4 Individual contribution records of the parish, religious community/institute, or organization shall be regarded as private and shall be maintained in strictest confidence.

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### 8. Reporting Ethical or Professional Misconduct

*Clergy, staff, and volunteers have a duty to report their own ethical or professional misconduct and the misconduct of others.*

- 8.1 Clergy, staff, and volunteers must hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. When there is an indication of illegal actions by clergy, staff, or volunteers, you should notify the proper civil authorities immediately. Also notify the *diocese*, parish, religious community/institute, or organization.
- 8.2 When an uncertainty exists about whether a situation or course of conduct violates this *Code of Pastoral Conduct* or other religious, moral, or ethical principles, consult with:
  - Peers,
  - Others knowledgeable about ethical issues, or
  - The Chancery office or responsible administrative authority for the religious community/institute, or organization.
- 8.3 When it appears that a member of clergy, a staff member, or a volunteer has violated this *Code of Pastoral Conduct* or other religious, moral, or ethical principles:
  - Report the issue to a supervisor or next higher authority, or
  - Refer the matter directly to the Chancery office or responsible administrative authority for the religious community/institute, or organization.
- 8.4 The obligation of Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors to report client misconduct is subject to the duty of confidentiality. However, any agreement or duty to maintain confidentiality must yield to the need to report misconduct that threatens the safety, health, or well-being of any of the persons involved except as provided for in Section 2.5.

# Volunteer's Code of Conduct

Our children are the most important gifts God has entrusted to us. As a volunteer, I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this Volunteer's Code of Conduct as a condition of my providing services to the children and youth of our St. Patrick Parish and School .

## As a volunteer, I will:

- Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with children and/or youth at Church activities.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition, or comparison when working with children and/or youth.
- Refuse to accept expensive gifts from children and/or youth or their parents without prior written approval from the pastor or administrator.
- Refrain from giving expensive gifts to children and/or youth without prior written approval from the parents or guardian and the pastor or administrator.
- Report suspected abuse to the pastor, administrator, or appropriate supervisor and the local Child Protection Services agency. I understand that failure to report suspected abuse to civil authorities is, according to the law, a misdemeanor.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children and/or youth.

## As a volunteer, I will not:

- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children and/or youth.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while volunteering.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Pose any health risk to children and/or youth (i.e., no fevers or other contagious situations).
- Strike, spank, shake, or slap children and/or youth.
- Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade children and/or youth.
- Touch a child and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates children and/or youth.
- Use profanity in the presence of children and/or youth.

I understand that as a volunteer working with children and/or youth, I am subject to a thorough background check including criminal history. I understand that any action inconsistent with this Code of Conduct or failure to take action mandated by this Code of Conduct may result in my removal as a volunteer with children and/or youth.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\*One copy for volunteer records and one copy for the parish /school office.

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