

DIOCESE OF LITTLE ROCK
CLERGY CODE OF CONDUCT

Behavioral Guidelines for Working with Children and Youth

The following represents a model for a Clergy Code of Conduct, specifically but not exclusively directed to all of the clergy in the Diocese of Little Rock who minister to and with young people:

- As a backdrop to the following Code, and to the extent that it is possible in each parish, and recognizing the economic limits of such, it is recommended that priest's office space be clearly separate from his living quarters. His residence would normally not be one in which parochial work is conducted, but rather a place where, for the general health and well-being of the priest, a residence apart from his work environment.
- Inasmuch as their residence is their home, it should be a place where priests have the opportunity for rest and for prayer. As a second backdrop to this code, permission is hereby granted for each rectory to have a chapel in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved for the spiritual benefit of the priest.
- The following code gives some specific directives in regard to the life of the priest in general, and specifically as it is lived in his office and in his place of residence (deacons where noted).
 - a. Only priest, seminarians, or priest's immediate family members may be overnight guests in rectories. Exceptions are based on common sense and good judgment, but always to the exclusion of minors staying in the rectory;
 - b. In accord with civil law, minors should not be afforded an opportunity to partake of alcohol, tobacco or drugs;
 - c. Topics, vocabulary, recordings, films, games, computer software, or any other form of personal interaction or entertainment that could not be used comfortably in the presence of parents must not be used with minors;
 - d. Discipline problems involving minors are to be directed and handled in coordination with parish or school staff and administration or the parents of the minor, always to the exclusion of corporal punishment;
 - e. Other than in those circumstances which, by their nature are to the spiritual benefit of a minor (e.g. confessional, counseling venue, hospital room) a priest or deacon should not be alone with a minor in a residence, sleeping facility, locker room, rest room, dressing facility, etc.

- f. If personal or physical attraction develops between a priest/deacon and a minor, the priest or deacon is responsible to maintain clear, professional boundaries;
- g. If one-on-one pastoral care of a minor should be necessary, the schedule of times and locations should create accountability, such as in the parish office or rectory office when other personnel are on duty;
- h. A priest or deacon should not take an overnight trip with a minor from a parish or school community who is not a member of his immediate family
- i. Trips or outings with minors that a priest or deacon hosts or chaperones must always have at least one other adult (parent or other responsible person) along as well;
- j. There should never be a time when a priest or deacon sleeps in the same bed with a minor. If attending a parish or school-sponsored event that requires a stay in a hotel or other sleeping room with a group of minors, the priest must sleep in his own bed in another room; deacons (and if their wives are present) should sleep in another room;
- k. Only with written parental permission may a priest or deacon administer medication of any kind;
- l. With regard to church facilities, as a rule, minors should not have keys or unlimited and unsupervised access. Any minor who has a key as a result of being a parish employee or volunteer should be screened in the same way as an adult employee or volunteer;
- m. Our Diocesan Insurance coverage **does not include** minors driving Church vehicles of any kind;
- n. Priests and deacons are cautioned not to take photographs of minors without the consent of the minor's parents;
- o. If anyone (adult or minor) abuses a minor in the presence of a priest or deacon, he should take appropriate steps immediately to intervene and to provide a safe environment for that minor. Report the incident to the appropriate authorities.

Approved and promulgated by Bishop J. Peter Sartain, Bishop of Little Rock, on October 14, 2004.