

Code of Conduct for Diocesan Personnel

(This Code is taken from the Yakima Diocese Policy Regarding Sexual Abuse of Minors by Clerics, Men and Women Religious, Seminarians, Employees and Volunteers dated March 1, 2010)

I. Individuals who minister to children and young people must maintain a professional role and be mindful of the trust and power they possess as ministers to children and young people. During such times as those individuals are ministering to children and young people in their capacity as diocesan personnel, they shall:

- 1) Never touch a minor in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- 2) Never be alone with a minor in a residence, rectory, sleeping facility, or any other closed room with the exception of the room reserved for the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confessional), and therapy rooms in a licensed mental health facility.
- 3) Never share a bed with a minor.
- 4) Never take an overnight trip alone with a minor.
- 5) Never provide to a minor sexually explicit or pornographic materials such as music, recordings, films, games, web sites, computer software, or entertainment.
- 6) Never provide to a minor alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs, or any mind-altering substance or psychotropic medication that has not been prescribed to that minor.
- 7) Never use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs.
- 8) Never abuse alcohol or legal drugs.
- 9) Never inflict physical (corporal) punishment on a minor.

II. Measures to Aid in the Observance of the Code of Conduct

- 1) Report any suspected child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities immediately.
- 2) Do not engage in physical contact when alone with a minor with the exception of being in a licensed professional setting.
- 3) Do not stay overnight with a minor unless there is another adult present in a supervisory role.
- 4) Do not drive alone in a vehicle with a minor except in an emergency or in a professional capacity such as a therapist transporting a minor.
- 5) Refrain from giving expensive or inappropriate gifts to a minor.
- 6) Do not meet privately with a minor in rooms, offices, or similar areas where there is no window or where the door cannot remain open. If one-on-one pastoral care of a minor is needed (e.g., the Sacrament of Reconciliation), do not meet in isolated locations.
- 7) Exercise caution in communicating with minors through e-mails or on the Internet. Share only work-related or ministry-related e-mail addresses with minors. Do not participate in chat rooms with minors.
- 8) Ensure that all personally assigned activities (extra-curricular, catechetical, youth ministry, scouting, athletics, etc.) have been approved in advance by the appropriate administrator.
- 9) Have an adequate number of adult supervisors at events (generally one adult per seven minors). A minimum of two adults in supervisory roles must be present during activities for minors.

- 10) Release minors only to parents or guardians, unless the parent or guardian has provided permission allowing release to another named adult. If a parent or guardian has forgotten to pick up a minor, the parent or guardian must be contacted before the minor is released to another adult.
- 11) Do not take minors away from the parish, school, or agency for field trips, etc. without another adult present in a supervisory role, except in case of an emergency. Obtain written parental permission before such activities. Permission slips should include the type, locations, dates and times of the activity and emergency contact numbers.

III. Practical Suggestions

A. Conduct that May be Permissible:

Appropriate affection between Church personnel and minors constitutes a positive part of Church life and ministry. Nonetheless, any touching can be misunderstood and must be considered with great discretion. Depending on the circumstances, the following forms of affection are customarily (but not always) regarded as appropriate:

- 1) Verbal praise
- 2) Handshakes
- 3) "High-fives" and hand slapping
- 4) Pats on the shoulder
- 5) Brief hugs
- 6) Holding hands while walking with small children
- 7) Sitting beside small children
- 8) Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
- 9) Holding hands during prayer
- 10) Pats on the head when culturally appropriate

B. Conduct that is Not Permissible:

Some forms of physical affection have been used by adults to initiate inappropriate contact with minors. In order to maintain the safest possible environment for minors, the following are examples of affection that are **not** to be used: (this policy is not meant to discourage incidental contact that might occur in the course of first aid or medical treatment).

- 1) Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- 2) Kisses on the mouth
- 3) Touching buttocks, chests or genital areas
- 4) Showing affection in isolated areas, such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms
- 5) Wrestling with minors
- 6) Tickling minors
- 7) Piggyback rides
- 8) Any type of massage given by a minor to an adult
- 9) Any type of massage given by an adult to a minor
- 10) Any form of unwanted affection
- 11) Compliments that relate to physique or body development

Note: #9 may be permissible as part of professional therapy by a professional physical therapist.