

In the Diocese of Bridgeport, we encourage every person who has information about any form of abuse or neglect, knowledge of someone in possession of child pornography or suspected boundary violations toward minors or Vulnerable Adults, to report this information to the Diocese of Bridgeport and to Civil Authorities. Clergy, Candidates for Ordination, Religious Sisters and Brothers, Employees, Volunteers, Tenants and Independent Contractors are **required** to report this information within 12-hours of becoming aware of it.

***Immediately call:***

**Erin Neil, L.C.S.W., Director of Safe Environment and Victim Assistance Coordinator Office: (203) 416-1406, Cell: (203) 650-3265, [eneil@diobpt.org](mailto:eneil@diobpt.org) or Michael Tintrup, L.C.S.W., Victim Assistance Counselor: (203) 241-0987**

**AND**

**The CT Department of Children and Family (D.C.F.) Child Abuse and Neglect Careline  
1-800-842-2288 within twelve (12) hours of becoming aware of the information**

**AND IF DIRECTED**

**Notify the police in the town where the incident occurred.**

**Immediately call (911) if there is imminent risk of harm to any person.**

***Third Party Reporting: Survivor and Witness Hotline 1-833-990-0004  
or [www.lighthouse-services.com/diobpt](http://www.lighthouse-services.com/diobpt)***

**To Report Sexual Misconduct by a U.S. Bishop, call 1-800-276-1562 /  
<https://reportbishopabuse.org> or call Kathleen D. Nowosadko, the province's local reporting  
individual: (860) 541-6475**

**For a report involving a Vulnerable Adult, call the police in the town  
where the incident occurred.**

***SUSPECTED BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS OR SUSPECTED  
GROOMING BEHAVIORS TOWARD MINORS OR A VULNERABLE ADULT***

If you have any concern about the safety of a child or Vulnerable Adult or if you have observed an early warning sign of inappropriate conduct or a violation of the Safe Environment policies, please call the Safe Environment Office with what you know. Suspected grooming behaviors toward minors must also be reported to the police and to the D.C.F. Care-line.

***(See Appendix H for examples of grooming behaviors and early warning signs of abuse)***

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The Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano



By the Grace of God and the Authority of the Apostolic See

Bishop of Bridgeport

**DECREE FOR THE PROMULGATION  
OF THE SAFE ENVIRONMENT HANDBOOK**

As Catholics, we share a sacred obligation to protect all of God's Children, especially the children, youth and vulnerable adults who are entrusted to our care.

In the Diocese of Bridgeport, our Safe Environment program and victim assistance ministry has been in place since 2003 and our Diocese has shown great leadership in the areas of child abuse prevention, detection, early intervention and outreach to survivors of sexual abuse. As our society and the Catholic Church face new challenges when it comes to the problem of child sexual abuse and other forms of abuse, we must continue to strengthen our response to this problem to ensure a safe environment, therefore we are issuing our third update to our policies and procedures relating to our implementation of the U.S.C.C.B. Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

In light of this sacred obligation to protect all of God's Children, I hereby issue an updated set of guidelines and procedures for the 2020 Safe Environment Handbook which includes updated Safe Environment guidelines for visiting clergy, updates to CT Mandatory reporting guidelines, a third-party reporting option for victims, reporting procedures for allegations involving a U.S. Bishop or Cardinal, procedures for reporting suspected grooming behaviors to civil authorities and updated procedures for the Sexual Misconduct Review Board.

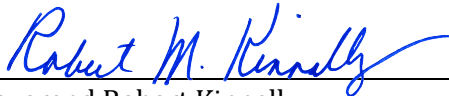
In the Diocese of Bridgeport, we continue our Safe Environment training utilizing VIRTUS Protecting God's Children for Adults, Think First and Stay Safe Curriculum of the Child Lures Prevention program and the Netsmartz program on technology safety. Safe Environment training and criminal background checks continue to be required of all clergy, employees, volunteers, tenants, vendors and independent contractors in the Diocese of Bridgeport and these safeguards must be renewed every 5 or 10 years based on a person's ministry.

The Safe Environment Handbook will be available online and in limited printed format and must be signed electronically through VIRTUS online.

The revised 2020 Safe Environment Handbook, and all of its accompanying policies and procedures, is promulgated for use throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport and is effective November 1, 2020.

Given at Bridgeport this 30<sup>th</sup> day of October 2020.

  
Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano  
Bishop of Bridgeport

  
Reverend Robert Kinnally  
Chancellor

## **I. The Diocese of Bridgeport Policies and Procedures Relating to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors (Revised 2020).**

### **1.0 PREAMBLE**

In accord with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops promulgated “Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with the Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons” as approved by the Apostolic See. The Charter addresses the Church’s commitment to deal appropriately and effectively with cases of sexual abuse of minors and Vulnerable Adults by priests, deacons, and other church Personnel (i.e., religious sisters and brothers, lay employees and volunteers). The Bishops of the United States renewed their promise to reach out to those who have been sexually abused as minors or as Vulnerable Adults by anyone serving the Church in ministry, employment, or a volunteer position, whether the sexual abuse was recent or occurred many years ago. They stated that they would be as open as possible with the people in parishes and communities about instances of sexual abuse of minors, with respect always for the privacy and the reputation of the individuals involved. They have committed themselves to the pastoral and spiritual care and emotional well-being of those who have been sexually abused and their families.

In addition, the Bishops will continue to work with parents, civil authorities, educators, and various organizations in the community to maintain the safest possible environment for minors. In the same way, the Bishops continue to evaluate the background of seminary applicants as well as all Church Personnel who have the responsibility for the care and supervision of children and young people.

The Diocese of Bridgeport will continue to implement these Norms diligently, compassionately, and fairly. This Policy and the procedures set forth herein will be reviewed every five (5) years by competent Diocesan authorities. The following policies and procedures are intended to implement these goals.

The terms are defined within the Code of Canon Law  
[http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/\\_INDEX.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM)

### **2.0 PROHIBITION OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS AND CHILD PORNOGRAPHY**

In the case of clerics, under the Universal Law of the Church, the sexual abuse of minors and Vulnerable Adults is a grave delict (offense whose judgement is reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The convicted offender is subject to severe penalties, including dismissal from the clerical state, if the case so warrants (c.f. c. 1395 of the Code of Canon Law).

Even a single verified act of sexual abuse of a minor – past, present, or in the future – by a cleric will lead to his permanent removal from sacred ministry (c.f. Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons, USCCB, 2018, Art. 5, Norms 8 and 9.)

In the case of a layperson, any act of sexual abuse of a minor by a lay employee or volunteer – past, present, or in the future – will lead to dismissal from any role and/or ecclesiastical office within the

Diocese or any Diocesan organization or institution. Any applicable penalties under the Code of Canon Law may also be imposed.

Under both Federal and Connecticut civil and criminal law, the sexual abuse of minors and possession of child pornography are grave crimes and an offender may be subject to severe penalties, including incarceration, fines, and/or monetary damages.

## 2.1 DEFINITION OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS and VULNERABLE ADULTS

Sexual abuse includes sexual molestation or sexual exploitation and other behavior by which an Adult uses a minor or Vulnerable Adult as an object of sexual gratification. This includes, but is not limited to, sexual contact with the intimate parts (genital area, groin, anus, inner thighs, buttocks, or breasts) of a minor for the purpose of sexual gratification or arousal or for the purpose of degrading or humiliating the minor. Deliberate touching of the intimate parts of a minor or Vulnerable Adult, a request to touch the intimate parts of the Adult, the exposure of the intimate parts of the Adult to a minor or requesting the minor or Vulnerable Adult to expose his or her intimate parts also constitute sexual abuse. A minor is a person who has not yet reached his or her eighteenth birthday. A Vulnerable Adult is defined as an Adult who experiences physical, emotional, intellectual, or psychological impairment or infirmities of aging that renders them unable to defend or protect himself/herself or where the Adult's movement is physically restricted such as in the case of Human Trafficking.

Child pornography is a form of child sexual exploitation. Federal law defines child pornography as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a minor (persons under 18 years of age). Images of child pornography are also referred to as child sexual abuse images. Federal law prohibits the production, distribution, importation, reception, or possession of any image of child pornography.

2.1.1 The transgressions in question relate to obligations arising from Divine commands regarding human sexual interaction as conveyed to us by the Sixth Commandment of the Decalogue. Thus, the norm to be considered in assessing an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor is whether conduct or interaction with a minor qualifies as an external, objectively grave violation of the Sixth Commandment (Canonical Delicts Involving Sexual Misconduct and Dismissal from the Clerical State, USCC, 1995, p. 6).

2.1.2 A canonical offence against the Sixth Commandment (c. 1395, §2, Code of Canon Law) need not be a complete act of intercourse. Nor, to be objectively grave, does an act need to involve force, physical contact, or a discernible harmful outcome. Moreover, immutability (moral responsibility) for a canonical offense "is presumed upon external violation." (c. 1321, §3. Cf. Cc. 1322-1327, Code of Canon Law [or art. 6 § 1, 1<sup>o</sup> SST, in the case of clergy].)

2.1.3 If there is any doubt whether a specific act qualifies as an external, objectively grave violation, the writings of recognized moral theologians may be consulted, and the opinions of recognized experts may be obtained (Canonical Delicts, p. 6). Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Bishop of Bridgeport, with the advice of the Diocese's Sexual Misconduct Review Board, to determine if the allegation warrants further action.

## 2.2 OTHER OBJECTIONABLE CONDUCT

2.2.1 Even conduct that does not constitute sexual abuse may be offensive or may create misunderstanding or embarrassment. Experience has shown that actions by a priest or deacon

with minors such as hugging, patting, tickling, or similar “horseplay,” even if intended innocently, may be misconstrued. Priests and deacons must be especially careful, therefore, to avoid such conduct, especially when other Adults are not present. The Diocese of Bridgeport maintains a Code of Conduct applicable to all Personnel and all Personnel will receive training regarding the updates to the Code of Conduct.

2.2.2 Similarly, lay employees and volunteers should refrain from engaging in any non-sexual physical contact with minors under their care, if there is any realistic possibility that the contact may be misunderstood by the minor or found objectionable by the minor’s parents. Notwithstanding the above, a teacher or other school employee or volunteer may use reasonable physical force in a school setting pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes § 53a-18 (6).

2.2.3 Connecticut law prescribes criminal penalties and fines for “any person who, having the control and custody of any child under the age of sixteen years, in any capacity whatsoever, maltreats, tortures, overworks, cruelly or unlawfully punishes such child,” Conn. Gen. Stat. §53-20, or “[a]ny person who willfully or unlawfully causes or permits any child under the age of sixteen years to be placed in such a situation that the life or limb of such child is endangered, the health of such child is likely to be injured, or the morals of such child are likely to be impaired, or does any act likely to impair the health or morals of any such child,” Conn. Gen. Stat. §53-21. In any case, where a teacher is required to use force, immediately report this to the Diocese of Bridgeport Office of the Superintendent and to the Office of Safe Environment.

## 2.3 DEFINITIONS: DISTRIBUTION OF POLICY

2.3.1 “Diocese” encompasses the Roman Catholic Diocese of Bridgeport in accord with canon 369 of the Code of Canon Law; all parishes and other inferior canonical juridical persons whose competent ecclesiastical superior is the Bishop of Bridgeport; The Bridgeport Roman Catholic Diocesan Corporation as chartered by the State of Connecticut; all other corporations (including parish corporations) having the Bishop of Bridgeport or Administrator of the Diocese of Bridgeport as their presiding officer; and all institutions, agencies, and organizations sponsored by these canonical or civil entities.

2.3.2 “Personnel” includes all persons (clergy, religious, and laity) who are employed by, are under personal contract with, or volunteer in any of the entities encompassed by the Diocese. Of special concern are those in supervisory capacities or in particularly sensitive areas, such as those who work with or around children, the very elderly and the physically or mentally infirm, those who counsel others, and generally those who work with people who are less capable of protecting themselves.

2.3.3 “Reasonable cause” means a prudent estimation based on trustworthy information that an incident occurred or has been perceived as having occurred.

2.3.4 “Credible” allegation, accusation, or information means that, under all the circumstances known at the time of the determination and following an investigation and the corroboration of certain facts, a prudent person would conclude that the allegation is more likely than not to have occurred.

2.3.5 A copy of this Policy will be distributed to all Personnel of the Diocese and posted on the website of the Diocese.

2.3.6 This Policy will be incorporated into all Diocesan Personnel guidelines.

2.3.7 This Policy will be communicated to the competent ecclesiastical superiors of all members of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life who serve as Personnel of the Diocese.

2.3.8 All Personnel will sign an acknowledgement of receipt of this policy electronically at time of registration for Safe Environment training.

2.3.9 A signed acknowledgment of receipt and understanding must be included in all personal contracts of employment with the Diocese.

2.3.10 A signed acknowledgment of receipt and understanding will be required of all Personnel of the Diocese. The signed acknowledgments of receipt and understanding of these guidelines will be returned by the above Personnel to the superior or supervisor and filed in the appropriate Personnel file. Clergy and employee forms are also maintained in their Personnel file at the Diocese. A copy of the Executive Summaries and acknowledgment of receipts are included in the back of the Safe Environment Handbook, following the Appendices.

### **3.0 SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM and PASTORAL CARE FOR VICTIMS**

#### **3.1 SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM**

In order to guard against incidents of sexual abuse of minors by Personnel of the Diocese, the Diocese will maintain a Safe Environment Program designed to prevent, identify, and respond to abuse, to provide appropriate education and ongoing training to Diocesan Personnel about inappropriate behavior and about warning signs of possibly abusive behavior. The Office of Safe Environment will evaluate the background of all Diocesan Personnel who have regular contact with minors in their ministerial or employment duties. Depending upon the position involved, such background checks may include: fingerprinting and a criminal records check, validation of Social Security number, verification of educational and professional degree(s), verification of previous employment, reference checks, mental health evaluation, illegal substance screening, and/or credit history check. Specific criteria for background checks for specific positions will be developed by the appropriate department head or supervisor in conjunction with the Office of Human Resources.

The Bishop of Bridgeport will maintain the position of Safe Environment Director, who will be charged with operation of the Safe Environment Program and assuring the monitoring of and compliance with the Policies and Procedures set forth in this document.

#### **3.2 ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS**

The Diocese of Bridgeport recognizes that sexual abuse of minors and Vulnerable Adults often causes serious and continuing emotional and psychological problems for the victim. Therefore, the Diocese is committed to provide victims of such misconduct with appropriate professional assistance to address these consequences of abuse by any Personnel of the Diocese.



The Bishop of Bridgeport will maintain the Victim Assistance Coordinator position which is responsible for receiving notification of all allegations of sexual abuse against a minor or Vulnerable Adult involving Personnel of the Diocese. The Victim Assistance Coordinator will advise the alleged victim of his/her rights and the procedures to be implemented under this Policy.

3.2.1 When credible accusations are made of sexual misconduct with a minor or Vulnerable Adult involving any Personnel of the Diocese, contact by the Victim Assistance Coordinator with the alleged victim and family will be promptly initiated. Contact should be made for the purpose of offering whatever concern or solace may be needed, with no comment as to the truth of any accusation. Medical, mental health, and spiritual assistance and, in appropriate instances, economic assistance may be offered in the spirit of Christian justice and charity, determined according to the specific situation presented.

3.2.2 Under the direction of the Victim Assistance Coordinator, competent counselors and social workers employed or designated by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Bridgeport will offer to provide appropriate assistance to persons who make a credible claim that any Personnel of the Diocese sexually abused them when they were minors or a Vulnerable Adult. This outreach will be made regardless of whether the alleged abuse was recent or occurred many years in the past. The outreach will include the offer of counseling, spiritual assistance, support groups, or other social services agreed upon between the victim and the Diocese.

#### **4.0 SEXUAL MISCONDUCT REVIEW BOARD**

4.1 The Diocese will maintain a Sexual Misconduct Review Board, which will function as a confidential consultative body to the Bishop of Bridgeport in discharging his responsibilities. The functions of this Board may include:

- (a) advising the Bishop in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and Vulnerable Adults in his determination of suitability for ministry or dismissal from employment or service to the Diocese as a layperson;
- (b) reviewing Diocesan policies for dealing with sexual abuse of minors and Vulnerable Adults;
- (c) offering advice on all aspects of these cases, whether retrospectively or prospectively; and,
- (d) reviewing allegations involving sexual abuse of minors by a member of the clergy who is deceased at the time of the allegation and advising the Bishop in his assessment of the allegation for public notification and placement onto the diocesan list of credibly accused clergy.

4.2 The Review Board will be appointed by the Bishop and will be composed of at least five persons of outstanding integrity and good judgment. The members of the Review Board will be selected to bring to their deliberations a variety of relevant skills and experience. The skills and experience may include psychology, social work, children's rights, law enforcement, Canon law, civil law, Personnel administration, and pastoral care. The majority of the Review Board members will be laypersons who are not employed by the Diocese. At least one member will be a priest who is an experienced and respected active or retired pastor of the Diocese of Bridgeport. At least one member should have expertise in treating individuals (and possibly their families) who have been sexually abused as minors or as a Vulnerable Adult. The members will be appointed for a term of three years, which may be renewed. If not a member of the Review Board, it is desirable that the Promoter of Justice participate in the meetings of the Review Board. The Bishop may designate a member to chair the

Review Board. The names of those who have agreed to serve as members of the Review Board have been published upon their appointment.

## **5.0 PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING TO THE DIOCESE SUSPECTED SEXUAL ABUSE OF A MINOR OR VULNERABLE ADULT**

### **5.1 OBLIGATION TO REPORT SUSPECTED SEXUAL ABUSE; COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

Any Personnel of the Diocese, who are mandated reporters as set forth in Appendix A, who have actual knowledge of or who have reasonable cause to suspect child pornography or sexual abuse against a minor or a Vulnerable Adult by any Personnel of the Diocese (including a priest or deacon), must report that information (unless to do so would violate the priest/penitent relationship of the Sacrament of Reconciliation). The report must be made to the Victims Assistance Coordinator. The Victim Assistance Coordinator may request the presence of Diocesan Legal Counsel during the report. Any person may make a report to Victim Assistance and to the police or D.C.F. Careline directly.

### **5.2 OPPORTUNITY TO REPORT**

Any person, whether or not employed by the Diocese, who believes that he or she, when a minor, was subjected to sexual abuse by any Personnel of the Diocese, or who obtains credible information about such misconduct, is encouraged to report it immediately to the Diocese. The report should be made to Victim Assistance of the Diocese. The reporting statement may be made by telephone, by mail, email, or through a third-party reporting hotline at 1-833-990-0004 or [www.lighthouse-services.com/diobpt](http://www.lighthouse-services.com/diobpt), which will allow any individual(s) to leave their name, contact information and the name of the cleric and the nature of the alleged misconduct. One person will be charged with responding to those making reports within 24 hours after receiving the message. While the Diocese will make every effort to be responsive to a report, the Diocese reserves the right not to investigate anonymous reports depending on an assessment of the nature of the anonymous report. Anonymous reports not investigated will, however, be documented for review if additional information is received in the future.

The reporting statement should include the name and contact information of the complainant, the name and position of the person alleged to have engaged in the misconduct, and the details of the incident or practice. The Victim Assistance Coordinator will maintain a log of all such statements. The report will be handled in confidence and no other Personnel, including supervisory Personnel, need be advised of this action. However, the Victims Assistance Coordinator may request the presence of Diocesan Legal Counsel when a report is made.

## **6.0 INVESTIGATION OF INCIDENT REPORTS; INTERIM PROTECTIVE MEASURES**

### **6.1 NOTIFICATIONS OF REPORT**

Victim Assistance will immediately notify the Bishop of Bridgeport and the Diocesan Legal Counsel of the receipt of any report of sexual misconduct against a minor or Vulnerable Adult by any Personnel of the Diocese. The report to the Bishop must be made within twenty-four hours, if possible. Diocesan Legal Counsel will assure that all appropriate civil authorities are immediately notified of every allegation of sexual abuse of a minor or Vulnerable Adult by Personnel of the Diocese and pledges to

fully cooperate with civil authorities in any investigation. Diocesan Legal Counsel will give notice of the report to insurers in accordance with the terms of applicable insurance policies.

## 6.2 REQUIREMENT OF INVESTIGATION

When an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor or Vulnerable Adult is received, a preliminary investigation will be initiated within 24 hours of receipt of the report and conducted promptly and objectively, including the appointment of an Investigator (or Investigators) for this purpose. In the case of a priest or deacon, the investigation will be conducted in conformity with the *Vademecum* on Certain Points of Procedure in Treating Cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors Committed by Clerics, published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, July 16, 2020. The Diocese will obtain legal advice, both civil and canonical, as soon as possible.

## 6.3 CONFIDENTIALITY

All Personnel of the Diocese, who are involved in the investigation and disposition of the report of sexual abuse, including the members of the Review Board, will refrain from publicly commenting on the report. Any public statements about the report or about any action taken in response to it may be made only with the explicit approval of the Bishop. Any media contact or inquiries regarding an incident of sexual misconduct by Personnel of the Diocese must be directed to the Diocesan Director of Communications.

## 6.4 INTERIM MEASURES

In the case of a cleric, the Bishop of Bridgeport may immediately remove the accused priest or deacon from ministry temporarily and may immediately suspend any lay employee (with pay) or volunteer, if the circumstances appear to the Bishop to warrant immediate action pending completion of the investigation. In the case of a cleric, administrative action (imposition of precautionary measures) may be taken immediately, even at the beginning of a preliminary investigation, at the discretion of the Bishop (cf. n. 58 of the *Vademecum* on Certain Points of Procedure in Treating Cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors Committed by Clerics). The alleged offender may be requested to seek, and may be urged voluntarily to comply with, an appropriate medical and psychological evaluation at a facility mutually acceptable to the Diocese and to the accused.

## 6.5 INVESTIGATION OF INCIDENT REPORTS

Diocesan Legal Counsel will assure that all appropriate civil authorities are immediately notified of every allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by Personnel of the Diocese and pledges to fully cooperate with civil authorities in any investigation. Each reported incident will be promptly investigated under the direction of Diocesan Legal Counsel, with care taken not to interfere with any confidential or civil/criminal investigation, and with a high level of Christian care, concern, and confidentiality for the alleged victim, the family of the alleged victim, the person reporting the incident, and the alleged perpetrator. The Diocese may elect to retain a person with investigative expertise in any or all cases of alleged abuse. A written report about the investigation of the incident will be provided to the Bishop of Bridgeport.

In the case of clerics, the Bishop is required to conduct a Preliminary Investigation of an alleged delict and, once the investigation is completed, to inform the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of the outcome. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith will inform the Bishop on how to further proceed, after the investigation has been submitted.

Unless circumstances warrant in a particular instance, the investigation ordinarily will be conducted in accordance with the following guidelines.

#### 6.5.1 PROCESS FOR INVESTIGATION

(a) Any report of alleged sexual abuse of a minor by any Personnel of the Diocese should be made to the Victim Assistance Coordinator and will be referred immediately by the Victim Assistance Coordinator to the Vicar for Clergy and to Diocesan Legal Counsel and may also include any other person identified by the Bishop. If the report was made to Diocesan Legal Counsel in the first instance, Diocesan Legal Counsel will refer the alleged victim to the Victim Assistance Coordinator.

(b) All appropriate steps will be taken to protect the reputation of the accused during the investigation. The accused will be encouraged to retain the assistance of civil (and in the case of a priest or deacon, canonical) counsel.

(c) Promptly after receiving a report of alleged sexual abuse of a minor or Vulnerable Adult, Diocesan Legal Counsel will initiate an investigation of the allegation. (For purposes of paragraphs 6.5.1 c and d, "Diocesan Legal Counsel" includes any person specially designated by the Bishop or by Diocesan Legal Counsel and acting under the direction of the Diocesan Legal Counsel). A canonical investigation will be initiated by the Bishop of Bridgeport in accord with c. 1717 of the Code of Canon Law and, in the case of clerics, in accord with the *Vademecum* on Certain Points of Procedure in Treating Cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors Committed by Clerics, published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, July 16, 2020. Diocesan Legal Counsel will also report the allegation to the Victim Assistance Coordinator and to civil authorities. If the alleged victim is not the source of the report, Diocesan Legal Counsel will endeavor to contact the alleged victim to obtain information directly from her or him. The alleged victim and any other witnesses will be encouraged to submit a written description of the incident or incidents, but it will be made clear that the report will be investigated even without a written complaint. Allegations involving a deceased member of the clergy, whose names does not already appear as a credibly accused cleric, will be reviewed.

(d) Diocesan Legal Counsel will attempt to identify and contact any other persons, in addition to the alleged victim, who may have relevant knowledge about the allegation.

(e) Diocesan Legal Counsel will promptly notify the accused person about the substance of the report. Diocesan Legal Counsel (and, in the case of a priest or Deacon, the Vicar for Clergy) will interview the accused person to obtain the accused person's response to the allegations contained in the report. The accused person will be informed of the right to obtain counsel in connection with the investigation and any ensuing proceedings.

(f) Diocesan Legal Counsel will immediately notify the Bishop and the Vicar for Clergy of any information developed in the course of the investigation that, in the Diocesan Legal Counsel's judgment, warrants immediate attention. In all events, no more than thirty days following the

initial receipt of the report, the results of the investigation, even if not yet completed, will be conveyed to the Bishop and to the Vicar for Clergy and to the Sexual Misconduct Review Board.

#### 6.5.2 REPORT TO SEXUAL MISCONDUCT REVIEW BOARD

The information conveyed to the Sexual Misconduct Review Board by Diocesan Legal Counsel must include the following information:

- (1) Unless the allegations are already well-known or unless personally identifying information is otherwise necessary, an anonymous reference to the accused person together with a description of the accused person's age, current clerical assignment and date of ordination, if applicable, and a general history of prior assignments;
- (2) An anonymous reference to the alleged victim (as well as to the person who initially submitted the report, if not the alleged victim), describing the alleged victim's gender, current age, and age at the time of the alleged incident(s), marital status, and current employment;
- (3) A complete and thorough recapitulation of the facts as alleged by the victim and the accused or from any other person who reported the alleged incident, including:
  - (i) the circumstances that lead to the person's decision to make the report, especially if the alleged incident occurred a long time in the past, and,
  - (ii) any professional psychological counseling or treatment the alleged victim would like to disclose as part of the investigation that may be related to the alleged incident;
- (4) A copy of any written statement submitted by the victim, the accused and any other person (with personally identifying information redacted if requested to preserve the anonymity of the person);
- (5) A description of all efforts to locate and contact any other persons with relevant knowledge of the alleged incident, including any persons who may have been suggested as witnesses by the priest or deacon who is the subject of the report;
- (6) A complete and thorough recapitulation of the facts as reported by such other persons, including the witness's views about the probable credibility of the allegations; and,
- (7) A description of further investigative steps the Diocesan Legal Counsel recommends be taken before the Review Board makes any final recommendations to the Bishop.

#### 6.5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS BY REVIEW BOARD

After receiving the information conveyed, the Review Board may:

- (a) Request that further information be pursued by the Diocesan Legal Counsel or by other Personnel of the Diocese; or
- (b) Immediately proceed to make a recommendation to the Bishop.

The recommendations the Review Board may make to the Bishop include (but are not limited to) the following:

- (a) The allegations are not supported by sufficient evidence or otherwise are not credible and the matter should be closed without adverse action regarding the accused
- (b) The allegations appear credible, but no final conclusions should be reached pending receipt of:
  - (i) a report of psychiatric or psychological evaluation of the accused, if the accused is willing to allow the release of such report to the Review Board,
  - (ii) a similar report from the alleged victim's professional psychiatric or psychological counselor, if the alleged victim is willing to authorize their release to the Review Board, or
  - (iii) additional specific information that still may be available.
- (c) The allegations appear to be supported by sufficient, credible evidence and steps should be taken:
  - (i) to remove the priest or deacon from ministry, either by consent (including retirement without faculties) or in accordance with the procedures provided by Canon Law, if the priest or deacon contests the findings, and/or
  - (ii) to place the name of the accused on the diocesan website and notify parishes where the accused cleric has served.
  - (iii) to terminate the employment of a lay employee or to terminate the service of a lay volunteer.

## 6.6 DETERMINATION BY THE BISHOP

The Bishop of Bridgeport and his advisors will review the written report reflecting the results of the investigation as well as the recommendations of the Review Board. If the alleged claim appears substantiated, then after consultation with competent Diocesan officials the Bishop of Bridgeport will notify the accused of the Bishop's determination and the alleged perpetrator may be permitted to freely resign from his/her ministry, or may be relieved from the exercise of any function or responsibility or ministry and/or employment in the Diocese and placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of any further investigation, including an outside investigation, such leave to be with or without pay and/or benefits as the Bishop may decide.

## 6.7 NOTIFICATIONS OF DECISION

If the alleged perpetrator is a cleric incardinated in the Diocese of Bridgeport, the report and investigation will be referred to the Bishop of Bridgeport in accordance with Canon Law and subject to the provisions of Canon 1722.

6.7.1 If he is a cleric incardinated in another diocese, the Bishop of Bridgeport will immediately refer the matter to his proper Ordinary for deliberation or further action.

6.7.2 If the alleged perpetrator is a member of a religious institute or a society of apostolic life, the Vicar for Clergy of the Diocese of Bridgeport will immediately contact the competent ecclesiastical superior of such member for consultation on the proper procedure to be followed.

## 6.8 RECORDS

The Diocese will keep appropriate records of each reported incident, the investigation, and the results thereof. The records will be marked confidential and the official record of any allegation against a priest, deacon or lay employee, will be stored in secure electronic format, with access limited to the Bishop of Bridgeport, Diocesan Legal Counsel, Victim Assistance Coordinator and other Diocesan officials designated by the Bishop on a strictly need-to-know basis. The records will be maintained permanently.

## 6.9 REPORT TO COMPLAINANT

Except in unusual circumstances, Diocesan Legal Counsel will notify the person who submitted the complaint about the results of the investigation and about any Personnel action taken as a result of the investigation.

## 7.0 ACTIONS TO ADDRESS INCIDENTS OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS BY PRIESTS OR DEACONS

When even a single act of sexual abuse by a priest or deacon is admitted, or is established after an appropriate process in accord with Canon Law, the offending priest or deacon will be removed permanently from ecclesiastical ministry. In addition, in appropriate cases, other canonical penalties may be imposed, which may include dismissal from the clerical state. Removal from ministry is required whether or not the cleric is diagnosed by qualified experts as a pedophile or ephebophile or as suffering from any other sexual disorder that may require professional treatment.

## 7.1 JURISDICTION

In every case involving canonical penalties, the processes provided for in Canon Law must be observed, and the various provisions of Canon Law must be considered (cf. Canonical Delicts Involving Sexual Misconduct and Dismissal from the Clerical State, 1995; Letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, May 18, 2001). Since sexual abuse of a minor is a grave offense, the Bishop of Bridgeport will refer all cases to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, including a request for a dispensation for a prescription in the event that the case is barred by the statute of limitations under Canon Law. Unless the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, having been notified, assumes direct responsibility for the case because of special circumstances, the Bishop of Bridgeport will proceed according to the directives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (Article 13, "Procedural Norms" for *Motu proprio Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, AAS, 93, 2001, p. 787.)

## 7.2 ASSISTANCE OF COUNSEL

For the sake of due process, the accused is to be encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel. When necessary, the Diocese will supply canonical counsel to a priest or deacon. The provisions of canon 1722 will be implemented during the pendency of the penal process.

## 7.3 FINDING OF CULPABILITY

When there is sufficient evidence that sexual abuse of a minor has occurred, the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith will be notified. The Bishop will then apply the administrative precautionary measures mentioned in canon 1722; that is, the Bishop will remove the accused from the sacred ministry or from any ecclesiastical office or function, impose or prohibit residence in a given place or territory, and prohibit public participation in the Most Holy Eucharist pending the outcome of the process.

#### 7.4 SANCTION IN LIEU OF DISMISSAL FROM MINISTRY

If the priest or deacon has either admitted culpability or been found culpable after a trial in accordance with Canon Law, and the perpetual penalty of dismissal from the clerical state has not been imposed (e.g., for reasons of advanced age or infirmity), the offender will be prescribed to lead a life of prayer and penance. He will not be permitted to celebrate Mass publicly or to administer the sacraments. He is to be instructed not to wear clerical garb, or to present himself publicly as a priest.

### 8.0 ADDITIONAL AUTHORITY OF THE BISHOP TO TAKE ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

In addition to the sanctions that the Bishop of Bridgeport or the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith may impose under Sections 2, 6, and 7 of this Policy, the Bishop of Bridgeport has the executive power of governance, through an administrative act,

- (a) to remove an offending cleric from office, to remove or restrict his faculties, and to limit his exercise of priestly ministry. (cf. cc. 35-58, 149, 157, 187-189, 192-195, 277 §3, 381, 383, 391, 1348, 1740-1747); and,
- (b) to limit, suspend, or terminate the employment of any “at will” lay employee and to terminate the service of any lay volunteer and to apply any other sanctions permitted by Ecclesiastical Law.

#### 8.1 “SINGLE INCIDENT” POLICY

Because sexual abuse of a minor is a crime in all jurisdictions in the United States, for the sake of the common good and observing the provisions of Canon Law, the Bishop of Bridgeport will exercise this power of governance to ensure that any priest or deacon who has committed even one act of sexual abuse of a minor as described above will not continue in active ministry.

#### 8.2 POSSIBLE ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES

The Bishop may exercise his executive power of governance to take one or more of the following administrative actions relating to a priest or deacon (cc. 381, 129ff):

- (a) He may request that the accused freely resign from any currently held ecclesiastical office (cc. 187-189).
- (b) If the accused declines to resign and if the Bishop judges the accused to be truly not suitable (c. 149, §1) at this time for holding an office previously freely conferred (c. 157), then he may remove that person from office observing the required canonical procedures (cc. 192-195, 1740-1747).



- (c) For a cleric who holds no office in the Diocese, any previously delegated faculties may be administratively removed (c. 391, §1 and 142, §1), and any *de lege* faculties may be removed or restricted by the competent authority as provided in law (e.g., c. 764).
- (d) He may also judge that circumstances surrounding a particular case constitute the just and reasonable cause for a priest to be allowed to celebrate the Eucharist with no member of the faithful present (c. 906) and, therefore, for the good of the Church and for the priest's own good, the Bishop may urge the priest to celebrate the Eucharist only under such circumstances and not to administer the sacraments.
- (e) Depending on the gravity of the case, the Bishop may dispense the cleric from the obligation of wearing clerical attire and may prohibit him from doing so (cc.85-88, 284).

Any of these administrative actions will be taken in writing and by means of decrees (cc. 47-58) so that the cleric affected is afforded the opportunity of recourse against them in accord with Canon Law (cc. 1734 ff).

## **9.0 LOSS OF THE CLERICAL STATE**

A priest or deacon may at any time request a dispensation from the obligations of the clerical state. In exceptional cases, the Bishop may request of the Holy Father the dismissal of the priest or deacon from the clerical state *ex officio*, even without the consent of the priest or deacon.

## **10.0 RESTRICTION ON TRANSFERS BETWEEN DIOCESES**

10.1 No priest or deacon who has committed an act of sexual abuse of a minor may be temporarily or permanently transferred (released or incardinated) for ministerial assignment to another diocese/eparchy or religious province. Before a priest or deacon of the Diocese of Bridgeport may be transferred for residence to another diocese/eparchy or religious province, the Bishop will forward in a confidential manner to the local bishop/eparch and religious ordinary (if applicable) of the proposed place of residence any and all information concerning any act of sexual abuse of a minor and any other information indicating that he has been or may be a danger to children or young people. This requirement applies even if the priest or deacon will reside in the local community of an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life (or, in the Eastern Churches, as a monk or other religious, in a society of common life according to the manner of religious, in a secular institute, or in another form of consecrated life or society of apostolic life).

10.2 Before the Bishop of Bridgeport receives a priest or deacon from outside his jurisdiction, the Bishop will obtain the necessary information regarding any past act of sexual abuse of a minor by the priest or deacon in question.

## **11.0 TRANSPARENCY: PROTECTION OF PERSONAL PRIVACY AND REPUTATION**

### **11.1 DANGER OF FALSE ALLEGATIONS**

Care will always be taken to protect the rights of all parties involved, particularly those of the person claiming to have been sexually abused and the person against whom the charge has been made. When an accusation has proved to be unfounded, every step possible will be taken to restore the good name of the person falsely accused.

### **11.2 PUBLICATION OF DIOCESAN ACTION**

When an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor or Vulnerable Adult has been verified, Diocesan Legal Counsel, with the assistance of the Director of Communications, will notify each parish where the accused priest has served and will publish an appropriate announcement of the action taken in response to the abuse. The Diocese will maintain a public record, including a website, that lists the names of priests and deacons who have been removed from ministry under this Policy.

### **11.3 CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS**

The Diocese will not enter into confidentiality agreements regarding allegations of sexual abuse of minors except for grave and substantial reasons advanced by the victim and noted in the text of the agreement.

## **12.0 OUTREACH TO AFFECTED PARISHES**

The Victim Assistance Coordinator will be responsible for taking immediate steps to assist and support parish and school communities directly affected by ministerial misconduct involving minors. This outreach will be accomplished by the Catholic Charities Emergency Response Team under the direction of the Victim Assistance Coordinator. The outreach may consist of a parish and/or school meeting at the affected parish, an offer of counseling to members of the affected community, explanation of the response process and informing the affected community of the action taken in response to the allegation.

## **13.0 COMPLIANCE WITH CIVIL LAWS; REPORTING TO CIVIL AUTHORITIES ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE OR MALTREATMENT OF MINORS and VULNERABLE ADULTS**

The Diocese of Bridgeport will comply with all applicable civil laws with respect to the reporting to civil authorities all allegations of sexual abuse of minors and Vulnerable Adults and will cooperate in their investigation. The Diocese of Bridgeport requires all Personnel of the Diocese to comply with these requirements, and appropriate sanctions may be imposed for failure to do so. Failure to comply with reporting requirements imposed by law can result in the assessment of substantial fines against persons with relevant knowledge.

The Diocese supports any person's right to make a report to public authorities concerning such allegations and, upon receiving an allegation of sexual abuse, will inform such person of his/her right to do so. See Section 3.2.

13.1 REPORTING INCIDENTS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE OR MALTREATMENT OR ENDANGERMENT  
and REPORTING ALLEGATIONS INVOLVING A VULNERABLE ADULT  
*(Refer to Appendix A, The State of Connecticut Mandatory Reporting Laws)*

**II. THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT CODE OF CONDUCT (Revised 2020)**

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**A. Preamble**

Priests, Deacons, Men in Formation for Ordination, Religious Sisters and Brothers, Lay Employees, Volunteers, Pastoral Ministers, Spiritual Counselors, Administrators, Tenants and Independent Contractors in our parishes, schools, programs and organizations, hereafter referred to as **Personnel**, must uphold Christian values and conduct. Parents are also encouraged to take an active interest in any and all services and programs in which their children are involved in the Diocese. This *Code of Conduct* provides a set of standards for conduct that apply to all Personnel within the Diocese. This document is subject to change.

**Definitions for the purpose of this document:**

- A **Minor** is defined as a person under the age of 18.
- A **Young Adult** is defined as a person age 18-20. Both a **Minor** and a **Young Adult** are defined as **Youth**.
- An **Adult** is defined as a person age 21 or older.
- A **Vulnerable Adult** is defined for the purpose of this document as an Adult who experiences physical, emotional, intellectual, or psychological impairment or infirmities of aging which renders them unable to defend or protect themselves or where the Adult's movement is physically restricted such as in the case of Human Trafficking.

- A **Cleared Adult** is someone who is in full compliance with the Safe Environment requirements of the Diocese of Bridgeport and the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

## **B. Responsibility**

Responsibility for adherence to the *Code of Conduct* rests with the individual. Personnel who disregard this *Code of Conduct* will be subject to disciplinary action which may take various forms up to and including dismissal from employment or volunteering depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm.

## **C. Conduct**

### **1.0 Conduct for Pastoral Counselors, Professional Counselors and Spiritual Directors**

Professional Counselors, Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors must respect the rights and advance the welfare of each person being counseled. Professional Counselors, Pastoral Counselors, Case Managers, Spiritual Directors and any other Personnel of the Diocese of Bridgeport providing counseling services will be referred to as Counselors from this point forward.

Professional Counselors and case management staff of Catholic Charities are mandated by state licensure and/or their credentialing organizations. Catholic Charities clinical counseling staff adheres to the policies of the Catholic Charities Mental Health Clinic Manual, as well as the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics which will supersede the Counseling Standards section of the Diocesan Code of Conduct.

1.1 Counselors shall not step beyond their competence in counseling situations and shall refer clients to other professionals when appropriate. Counselors should carefully consider the possible consequences before entering into a counseling relationship with someone with whom they have a pre-existing relationship.

1.2 Counselors should not audiotape or videotape sessions without written or videotaped consent.

1.3 Counselors must never engage in sexual intimacies with the persons they counsel. This includes consensual and nonconsensual contact, forced physical contact, and inappropriate sexual comments.

1.4 Counselors must never engage in sexual intimacies with individuals who are close to the client—such as relatives or friends of the client—when there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client. Counselors should presume that the potential for exploitation or harm exists in such intimate relationships.

1.5 Counselors assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all counseling and counseling-related relationships. It is recommended that counselors maintain a log of the times, locations, and content of scheduled sessions whenever possible.

## 2.0 Confidentiality

Information disclosed to a Counselor during the course of counseling, advising or spiritual direction shall be held in the strictest confidence possible. All legal requirements will be followed in any case where there is an allegation of abuse against a minor **except when the information is obtained under the Sacramental Seal of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Information obtained under the Sacramental Seal is absolutely prohibited from disclosure.**

2.1 Information obtained in the course of counseling sessions shall be confidential, except as required by law. If there is clear and imminent danger to the person who is being counseled or to others, the Counselor must disclose only the information necessary to protect the parties affected and to prevent harm.

- Before disclosure is made if feasible, the Counselor should inform the person being counseled about the disclosure and the potential consequences.

2.2 While counseling a minor, if a Counselor 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 and to the proper civil authorities is essential to the child's health and well-being, the Counselor should attempt to secure consent from the minor for the specific disclosure. If consent is not given, disclose the information necessary to protect the health and well-being of the minor.

2.3 Counselors should not discuss confidential information in any setting unless privacy can be ensured.

2.4 D.C.F. reports and ongoing investigations must be kept confidential.

## 3.0 Conduct with Minors and Vulnerable Adults

Personnel shall maintain open and trustworthy relationships with minors, youth, Vulnerable Adults and Adult supervisors, observing the following rules and guidelines:

3.1 The Rule of Two. Personnel must be aware of their own and others' vulnerability when working with minors and Vulnerable Adults. Use a team approach by ensuring that there are always two or more Adults present in close proximity when managing all activities where minors and Vulnerable Adults are present. (You should be able to see / hear another Adult).

3.2 Use or possession of illegal drugs is prohibited at all times.

3.3 Use of alcohol when working with minors or Vulnerable Adults is prohibited. An abundance of caution must be used during any event serving alcohol where minors may be present. If alcohol will be served, high school student volunteers must be supervised at all times by their parent, legal guardian or two cleared Adults. Alcohol may not be served for events where younger children and elementary students are present if they are not accompanied by their parent or legal guardian.

3.4 Sexually inappropriate conversations with minors and other Adults are prohibited. All human sexuality lessons and discussions should be part of an approved Diocesan curriculum or part of normal counseling. These lessons or counseling sessions will conform to the Church's teachings on the topic.

3.5 Diocesan Personnel will not use vulgarity or profanity in the presence of minors.

3.6 Being nude in the presence of minors or Vulnerable Adults is prohibited. Personnel must adhere to a proper dress code at all times. Personnel should consult with their supervisor regarding appropriate dress codes.

3.7 Viewing or taking sexually oriented, nude or morally-inappropriate materials (magazines, calendars, cards, videos, films, website material, computer files, social media, cell phone camera images, art images, clothing or any other items containing inappropriate materials) on Diocesan property or showing them to minors is prohibited.

3.8 Diocesan Personnel are prohibited from creating a pattern of behavior or environment that a reasonable person would find shaming, threatening, frightening, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

3.9 Clergy and Religious Personnel shall not invite or allow a minor, youth or Vulnerable Adult, unaccompanied by one of their Adult immediate family members, to visit or stay overnight in any premises used as the residence for Clergy or Religious Personnel, or other Personnel except for members of the Clergy or Religious Personnel's family. Clergy should not permit minors, youth or Vulnerable Adults other than their own family members, to stay overnight nor allow them into a cleric's private accommodations at any time.

3.10 Clergy as well as Lay Personnel of the Diocese of Bridgeport should not provide shared or private overnight accommodations for minors for church sponsored activities including, but not limited to, accommodations in any Church-owned facility, private residence, hotel room, or any other place where there is no other Adult supervision present. In rare, emergency situations, when accommodation is necessary for the health and well-being of the minor or Vulnerable Adult, the Clergy or Personnel of the Diocese should take extraordinary care to protect all parties from the appearance of impropriety and from all risk of harm.

3.11 Personnel may not meet alone with minors in secluded areas away from other Adults. Two Adults must be present in close proximity where any tutoring or other similar activity takes place.

3.12 Personnel who work with children must be aware of the boundaries that must always exist with a minor both in person and while using technology. Maintain clear and professional boundaries in all conversations with minors. Personnel are not permitted to discuss the details of sexual or romantic relationships with minors.

3.13 Communication with minors must be transparent. Parents must be fully aware of all mediums being used to keep in contact with their children for ministerial purposes. One way to maintain transparency is to copy a parent on any electronic communication.

3.14 Electronic Communication with Minors and Vulnerable Adults

***(See Appendix C Guidelines for Trips, Events and Electronic Communication with Minors)***

**Summary of Requirements:**

- (a) Adults who work with youth must remain current on the risks associated with all forms of technology used to connect with youth. Information must also be made available to parents and minors on the safe use of the technology.

- (b) All Personnel must maintain appropriate boundaries with minors in all electronic communication. Personnel shall communicate with minors transparently through official school or parish e-mail accounts, discussion boards and websites.
- (c) This policy does not prohibit Personnel from communicating through personal forms of technology (such as texting) through a personal phone or messaging system where a minor is a family member or when the Adult is identified in writing by the parent or legal guardian on the child's emergency contact list.
- (d) Information obtained through online communication concerning illegal activity involving minors must be immediately reported to the appropriate civil authorities and the Office of Safe Environment in accordance with Diocesan reporting policies and Connecticut Mandatory Reporting Laws.
- (e) Written permission must be obtained prior to taking photos or posting photographs, or other identifying information, of minors/young people on websites.
- (f) All communication with minors should be transparent and Adults should avoid the use of acronyms or attachments that may be misunderstood by a minor or by an Adult. Avoid late evening and early morning electronic communications and avoid frequent texting that may appear excessive to a reasonable person.

#### **4.0 Guidelines for Church Related Activities with Minors and Vulnerable Adults**

The following general guidelines are intended to prevent abuse of minors by preventing situations where abuse can occur:

4.1 When releasing minors from one's care to someone else's care, they are to be released only to the custodial parent(s), legal guardians(s), or others who have the written permission of the custodial parent(s) and/or legal guardian(s). If unsure, consult supervisors before releasing the minor and check a photo ID. Schools, parishes and programs should have written guidelines in place for arrival and dismissal to ensure that each minor arrives safely to their destination and to ensure that the minor is safely returned to the care of their parent or legal guardian at the end of the school day, the event or the activity. Each location should communicate to all parents the approved arrival and dismissal procedure for that location.

4.2 No minor or young Adult (18-20) may have principal responsibility for supervising or carrying out a church-related activity without two Adults (21 years of age or over) present. You may have a minor assistant catechist in a classroom, however, a cleared Adult who is age 21 or older must be physically present in that immediate room and there must be a second cleared Adult in close proximity such as a hall monitor or a classroom immediately across the hallway.

4.3 Uncontrollable or unusual behavior of minors must be reported to parents or legal guardians and to supervisors.

4.4 Use or possession of illegal drugs is prohibited at all times. Use or possession of alcohol is prohibited at all times when working with minors or during youth events.

4.5 Supplying alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs and/or tobacco products to minors is prohibited.

4.6 Supplying minors with medications of any kind, including over-the-counter drugs, without the written consent of the custodial parent(s) or guardian(s) is prohibited.

4.7 All trips involving minors must be individually reviewed for safety and all plans must be placed in writing (*Refer to Appendix C*).

4.8 Transportation of minors: The school or parish should first explore the use of a bus or other forms of public transportation. Using personal vehicles to transport minors (other than their own child) should be considered only as a last resort. When no other means of transportation is possible for a ministry-based trip, refer to Appendix C of this Handbook.

4.9 Personnel will refrain from giving gifts or money to minors and/or youth without prior approval from the parent or guardian of the youth. Personnel are prohibited from giving gifts containing sexual material or age inappropriate content to minors.

4.10 Personnel will not use any discipline that a reasonable person would find humiliating, degrading or excessive based on the age and maturity of the minor and the nature and extent of the minor's violation of a rule or policy.

## **5.0 Physical Contact with Minors and Vulnerable Adults**

The Diocese of Bridgeport desires to implement and maintain a positive and nurturing environment for our children and youth while at the same time preventing harm. The following rules address conduct expected of all Diocesan Personnel when dealing with minors, youth or Vulnerable Adults. Physical contact with minors, youth and Vulnerable Adults should occur (a) only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and (b) never in private.

5.1 Corporal punishment (spanking, striking, shaking, slapping, shoving, pushing, pinching, hitting or any touching that a reasonable person would construe as punitive) is prohibited.

5.2 Pursuant to CT Law (CGS Sect. 53a-18 (6)), a teacher or other Personnel entrusted with the care and supervision of a minor, youth or other Vulnerable person for school purposes may use reasonable physical force upon the minor, youth or other Vulnerable person when and to the extent that a reasonable person would find it necessary to: remove the minor, youth or Vulnerable person (Adult) in order to maintain order; to protect him/herself or others from immediate physical injury; to obtain possession of a dangerous instrument or controlled substance; or to protect property from physical damage.

5.3 Pursuant to CT Law (CGS Sect. 53a-18 (1)), a parent, guardian, teacher or other Personnel entrusted with the care and supervision of a minor, youth or Vulnerable Adult for catechetical instruction and church related activities may use reasonable physical force upon the minor, youth or other Vulnerable person when and to the extent that a reasonable person would find it reasonably necessary to maintain discipline or to promote the welfare of such minor, youth or Vulnerable person.

- Physical force should be used only as a last resort of discipline after all other measures have proved to be inadequate. Use only the level of physical discipline minimally necessary to maintain order.

5.4 Appropriate affection between an Adult and a minor is often important for a child's development. Some examples of **APPROPRIATE** forms of affection include, but are not limited to the following:



- Handshakes; “High-fives” and hand slapping; Verbal praise; Holding hands while walking with small children; Sitting beside small children; Holding hands during prayer; Pats on the head when culturally appropriate.

5.5 Examples of **INAPPROPRIATE** contact not to be used, include but is not limited to the following:

Kisses on the mouth and inappropriate or lengthy hugs or embraces; Spanking; Holding minors, above the approximate age of 5, on one’s lap; Touching buttocks, genital areas, or breasts and touching knees, thighs or legs as a show of affection; Showing physical displays of affection in isolated areas of the premises such as bedrooms, closets, bathrooms, Employee Only areas, or other private-rooms; Sleeping in bed with a minor, youth or Vulnerable Adult; Wrestling with minors, youth or Vulnerable Adults except for legitimate sports coaching, in which case another Adult must be present; Tickling; Piggyback rides; Any type of massage given by an Adult to a minor, youth or Vulnerable Adult; Any display of unwanted affection or physical contact towards a minor, youth or Vulnerable Adult; Actions that include compliments relating to sexual attractiveness or sexual development.

5.6 Students who require assistance with correcting their attire (i.e. buttons, ties, shirts) should be physically assisted only if they are physically unable to correct their own attire and should be assisted in the presence of another Adult.

5.7 Adults are charged with establishing boundaries with minors, youth or Vulnerable Adults. No Adult may allow or encourage a minor, youth or Vulnerable Adult to engage in any of the above (Section 5.5) actions with Adults or with other minors, youth or Vulnerable Adults.

5.8 When a minor is suspected of using, possessing or distributing an illegal substance, two Adults of the same gender should be present when investigating or conducting any search. No Adult may touch any minor on their body and may not request a minor to remove clothing while conducting a search. The proper authorities should be contacted and parents should be immediately notified if the suspicion of the use, possession or distribution of an illegal substance is confirmed. Parent must be required to pick up their child.

## **6.0 Supervision of Programs that Involve Minors and Vulnerable Adults**

The primary standard being implemented here is the presence of multiple Adults (at least two) at all church-related programs and activities for minors. This standard does not apply to the Sacrament of Reconciliation or to situations where an individual is seeking unscheduled and immediate pastoral care or scheduled clinical counseling sessions. The goal of this standard is to lessen the chances of abuse occurring or going unnoticed. In this light:

**6.1 The Rule of Two.** Personnel must be aware of their own and others’ vulnerability when working alone with youth. Use a team approach by ensuring that there are always two or more Adults present when managing all youth activities.

**6.2 Religious instruction outside the parish property:** Religious education should take place on parish property or through an approved online program. The use of an outside facility must be reviewed and approved by the Pastor, Diocesan Legal Counsel and Office of Safe Environment.

6.3 Personnel under the age of 18 in the Diocese of Bridgeport must work under the direction of an Adult supervisor, including classrooms, religious education, retreats and when babysitting on Diocesan premises.

6.4 Pastors, Principals and Supervisory Personnel must be aware of and approve all programs for minors that are sponsored by a parish, school, or institution and should do so only after the appropriate standards and safeguards are in place.

6.5 There should always be at least one Adult present in each classroom and another Cleared Adult supervisor or monitor must also be present in the same building in close proximity when religious education classes, school classes or other youth group meetings are being held.

6.6 Outside meetings that are open to the public and Adult education classes that take place on Diocesan premises must have a written agreement for the use of that meeting space that is in full compliance with Safe Environment policies. The person responsible for the activity or group must sign the executive summary which applies to their specific role or position, clear a criminal background check and attend Safe Environment awareness training.

6.7 When Personnel of the Diocese of Bridgeport are working one-on-one with a minor, the door to the meeting space must be left open and a second Adult must be present within the same building. The second Adult must be aware that the meeting is taking place and should be in close proximity. Professional Counselors who work one-on-one with minors should follow professional licensing standards and agency protocol for regulating the supervision and use of appropriate counseling rooms and office space. Whenever possible, all classrooms and counseling rooms should have doors with a window. It is highly recommended that future construction of confidential meeting spaces contains glass doors or windows where practicable.

6.8 Separate lavatories for Adults and children should be used whenever possible. Lavatory use by minors should be monitored. Each location should individually review these spaces and develop a policy to ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place.

6.9 Sleeping in the same room or sleeping area with minors is generally prohibited. Unique accommodations or situations may be individually presented in writing to the Office of Safe Environment for consideration. If Adults must stay in the same open space as any minors, overnight awake supervision must be in place and there must be two or more unrelated Adults in full compliance with Safe Environment policies of the same gender, staying in the facility or room. Adults may not sleep in close proximity to minors on any floor area indoors or outdoors. Precautions should be taken to prevent abuse and to ensure the protection of Adults from any appearance of impropriety.

6.10 Buildings and meeting space should be monitored and inspected at all times by a supervisor to ensure the safety of the meeting space, to address any safety concerns and to control access to the building. Report any safety concerns immediately to the pastor, lay supervisor or to a Diocesan official.

6.11 Anonymous Self-Help groups are permitted to meet on Diocesan and parish premises during times when there are minors present in the building provided that the minors and Adults use separate rest room facilities.

6.12 Celebrations, including but not limited to, end of year events for students may not take place in private homes of any Personnel unless approved in advance by Diocesan Legal Counsel and the Office of Safe Environment.

6.13 All entertainers, vendors and guests for youth retreats and public Diocesan events where youth may be present and unaccompanied by their parent or legal guardian, must be in full compliance with Safe Environment policies. Short-term visitors (less than 3 hours) and one-time only guest speakers must be directly monitored by a Cleared Adult for the entire time they are present with minors and they must be instructed to use a faculty or staff-only bathroom.

## **7.0 Conflicts of Interest**

A conflict of interest is a conflict between the private interests and the official or professional responsibilities of a person in a position of trust.

7.1 Personnel of the Diocese of Bridgeport should avoid situations that might present a conflict of interest. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call integrity and professional conduct into question.

## **8.0 Reporting Ethical or Professional Misconduct**

*Personnel of the Diocese of Bridgeport have a duty to report their own ethical or professional misconduct and the misconduct of others and must hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. Personnel may not harass, threaten, terminate, or otherwise jeopardize the employment or volunteer position of any Personnel for properly reporting a violation of this **Code of Conduct**, the **Sexual Misconduct Policy** or the **Anti-Harassment Policy**.*

8.1 Reporting Suspected Abuse of a Minor or Risk of Harm to a Minor in the Diocese of Bridgeport  
*This section summarizes Connecticut Mandated Reporting Law. The **Policy** may be found at [www.ct.gov/D.C.F.](http://www.ct.gov/D.C.F.) (See Appendix A) and **Reporting Suspected Abuse of a Minor in the Diocese of Bridgeport** (See Appendix B).*

All Clergy, Religious Sisters and Brothers, Seminarians, Candidates for the Diaconate, Lay Employees, Volunteers, Tenants, and Independent Contractors of the Diocese of Bridgeport have a duty to report early warning signs of abuse, situations that could be a potential risk to a minor and any form of suspected abuse of a minor and Vulnerable Adult. If you have reasonable cause to suspect risk of harm to a minor or actual abuse of a minor by a Priest, Deacon, Man in Formation, Religious Sister or Brother, Lay Employee, Volunteer, Tenant, Vendor or Independent Contractors of the Diocese of Bridgeport, whether the incident occurred recently or in the past, you must report that information immediately to the Diocese of Bridgeport Victim Assistance at (203) 650-3265 or (203) 241-0987 and to the Connecticut Department of Children and Family (D.C.F.) Services Careline at 1-800-842-2288 and to the local police if directed. If you are unable to reach Victim Assistance, you must contact Diocesan Legal Counsel (203) 416-1360.

8.2 **Mandated reporters** must report orally to the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (D.C.F.) Careline or to a law enforcement agency within 12 hours of suspecting that a child has been abused or neglected and the mandated reporter must submit a written report (D.C.F.-136 form) to D.C.F. within 48 hours of making the oral report.

**8.3 Informing the Diocese.** In the event that an investigator or a police officer arrives to a school, a parish, or a Diocesan program unannounced, immediately inform the supervisor and contact the Director of Safe Environment. A police officer may not speak with a minor without parental consent. For all D.C.F. investigations, the Diocese should be made aware that an investigation is taking place on the premises and a second Adult should be present in the room or in view of the investigator who is with the minor. Request to see the photo I.D. of any Adult claiming to be a police officer or a D.C.F. employee and record the name and badge number of the person who is onsite.

**8.4 Incidents involving two minors.** In the case of an incident involving two minors, where one minor is suspected of inappropriate physical or sexual conduct with another minor, immediately notify your supervisor and the Victim Assistance Coordinator, and if directed, you should also notify D.C.F. or the police.

**8.5 Risk of Harm to Self or to Others.** If you suspect (through information reported to you or observed) that a person is in danger of physical harm to his or herself or to others, notify the police immediately and contact the Victim Assistance Coordinator (203) 650-3265 / (203) 241-0987. Mobile Crisis Services is a resource for a person experiencing a psychiatric emergency and can be reached by dialing 211.

**8.6 Child Pornography.** It is a crime to knowingly produce, distribute, receive or possess with intent to distribute child pornography. Personnel are required to report suspected child pornography to the police or to D.C.F. within 12 hours of becoming aware and to the Victim Assistance Coordinator of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

**8.7 Vulnerable Adults.** To report an allegation of abuse or neglect involving a Vulnerable Adult and for additional resources, immediately contact the police in the town where the alleged incident occurred. **Protective Services for the Elderly should also be contacted at the Department of Social Services 1 (888) 385-4225** After business hours or on weekends or state holidays, please call **Info-line at 2-1-1** For an allegation of abuse or neglect involving an individual with an intellectual disability between the ages of 18 and 59, call **1 (844) 878-8923**.

For questions or concerns relating to this Code of Conduct or the Safe Environment Program, please contact The Diocese of Bridgeport, Office of Safe Environment (203) 416-1406.

### **III. THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY**

Personnel must not engage in physical, psychological, written, verbal, or any other form of harassment and must not tolerate such harassment by other Personnel.

Personnel of the Diocese of Bridgeport shall provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written or verbal intimidation or harassment from the perspective of a reasonable person.

Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, written, or verbal behavior, including without limitation the following examples:

- Physical or mental abuse
- Comments about an individual's real or perceived disability and/or medical condition
- Racial insults
- Derogatory ethnic slurs
- Unwelcome sexual advances or touching
- Sexual comments or sexual jokes
- Requests for sexual favors used as a condition for employment or to affect other Personnel decisions, such as promotion or compensation
- Display of materials that would be found offensive to a reasonable person

The above examples of harassment apply to any form of communication including any form of electronic communication, texting, email, etc. Harassment can be a single severe incident or a persistent pattern of behavior whereby the purpose or the effect is to create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating work environment. Allegations of harassment involving two Adult employees and/or volunteers of the Diocese must be taken seriously and reported immediately to the Office of Human Resources (203) 416-1402.

Information related to Adult harassment involving a member of the Clergy must be immediately reported to the Vicar for Clergy (203) 416-1633. The ***Diocese of Bridgeport Anti-Harassment Policy*** will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.

### **IV. THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR BACKGROUND CHECKS**

#### **A. Policy**

All members of the Clergy, Religious Sisters and Brothers, Seminarians, Candidates for the Diaconate, Lay Employees, Volunteers, Independent Contractors, Vendors and Tenants (age 18 and over) must clear a criminal background check prior to an assignment, commencing employment or volunteer work in the Diocese of Bridgeport and successfully clear a criminal background check on a renewal schedule of five (5) or ten (10) years based on their responsibility.

The items reviewed are determined by pre-established criteria for background checks as they relate to the position or services potentially being completed by the individual. The Office of Safe Environment evaluates background check criteria that are in addition to the USCCB Charter. In all

cases, a signed authorization to complete the check(s) which may be electronic must be obtained from the individual prior to initiating the process.

All contracts with any company that provide services in the Diocese of Bridgeport will include the requirement that the company providing the service has conducted criminal background checks on their employee(s) age 18 and over and are required to submit proof to the Diocese of Bridgeport that they have cleared a background check through their organization prior to initiating services with any entity of the Diocese of Bridgeport. All independent contractors, vendors or tenants will not be assigned to the Diocese unless they have successfully completed that check. In the event that the company does not have a process for completing criminal background checks, they may utilize the process in place within the Diocese of Bridgeport. The expense of these background checks will be the responsibility of the Contractor.

The Diocese and its entities have the right to deny an individual an assignment for a ministry, employment, the opportunity to volunteer or decline a contract employee based on the individual's failure or refusal to complete these items and/or adverse information obtained through the background check process. If an applicant is denied employment, the opportunity to volunteer, or the opportunity to provide services based on adverse information, the Diocese will send a Notice of Adverse Action to the individual along with the report and a copy of their rights, in compliance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act 15 U.S.C 1681-1681U, as amended by the Consumer Credit Reporting Reform Act of 1996.

## **B. Procedures**

### **1.0 Clergy, Religious Sisters and Brothers, Men in Formation**

1.1 This category includes the following:

- Active Diocesan Priests, Deacons and Religious Sisters and Brothers
- Retired Priests and Deacons who continue to celebrate occasional sacraments
- Visiting and International Priests to be assigned within the Diocese
- Religious Sisters and Brothers who are retired and continue to assist in the Diocese
- Diocesan Priests and Deacons incardinated in the Diocese of Bridgeport who are living outside of the diocese
- Religious Order Priests serving in the Diocese of Bridgeport
- Candidates for the Diaconate
- Seminarians of the Diocese of Bridgeport and Seminarians from other Dioceses residing in the Diocese of Bridgeport

#### Renewal Schedule:

Priests, Deacons, Religious Sisters and Brothers are required to complete a criminal background check every five (5) years. Clergy and Religious Personnel will be required to complete the background check for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

### Procedures:

- (a) Prior to conducting any background check, a fully completed authorization form will be requested by the Office of Clergy and Religious Personnel at the time the person is assigned in the Diocese of Bridgeport.
- (b) The background check authorization form will be submitted to the Office of Safe Environment for completion.
- (c) Checks will include: State Conviction Records; National Crime Registry – searches all state sex offender registries, high crime registries and foreign national's registry; Social Security Number Trace; DMV Records; Credit Check and Employment History Verification.
- (d) Results will return to both the Director of Safe Environment and the Vicar for Clergy.
- (e) In the event the background check reveals a problem, the Vicar for Clergy will evaluate this information together with the appropriate Diocesan authority. Any results that divulge information regarding crimes against children or sex crimes will result in the person being prohibited from serving in the Diocese of Bridgeport under the USSCB Charter.
- (f) The Bishop and/or Vicar for Clergy will inform the individual and they will send an adverse action notice to the individual with a copy of the report and a copy of the individual's rights. If the individual believes that misinformation exists on the report, they should work through the investigative agency to resolve this.

The Vicar for Clergy will ensure the permanent and secure storage of all Clergy and religious Personnel background check results and authorization forms.

### 1.2 Visiting Clergy from Outside the Diocese

1. In response to the USSCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and in accord with the *Safe Environment Handbook* of the Diocese of Bridgeport, it is the shared responsibility of the Diocese and of every cleric to ensure the safety of children and Vulnerable persons within the diocese on occasions when a priest or deacon from outside the diocese visits and serves in any ministerial capacity.
2. Any visiting priest or deacon not incardinated in the Diocese of Bridgeport who intends to serve at only one ministerial event (e.g., funeral or wedding) or more than one related ministerial events (e.g., ordination and Mass of Thanksgiving) and who will not stay overnight in lodging owned by the diocese, by the host parish or institution or by a host family, must provide a testimonial of suitability from his bishop, eparch (for an Eastern Rite priest) or religious superior.
3. Any visiting priest or deacon who will stay overnight in lodging owned by the diocese, by the host parish or institution or by a host family must also provide proof of background check and VIRTUS training and sign the Executive Summary of the *Safe Environment Handbook*.
  - All documents must be sent to the Office of Clergy and Religious for archival purposes (cf. Appendix A: "Authorization and Release for the Procurement of an Investigative Report" and Appendix B: "Executive Summary for Clergy and Men in Formation").
4. Any visiting priest or deacon not incardinated in the Diocese of Bridgeport who intends to provide regular and consistent ministerial assistance in the Diocese (e.g., regularly-scheduled celebration of sacraments) or who will remain for an extended time in the Diocese of Bridgeport, and any priest coming from a foreign country who intends to minister in any capacity (e.g. mission appeal) must:
  - Provide a testimonial of suitability from his bishop, eparch (for an Eastern Rite priest) or religious superior;
  - Provide proof of background check;

- Provide proof of VIRTUS training;
- Sign the Executive Summary of the *Safe Environment Handbook*.

All of this documentation must be sent to the Office of Clergy and Religious for archival purposes.

5. It is the responsibility of the host parish or institution:
  - To communicate all Safe Environment requirements beforehand to visiting priests or deacons;
  - To pay for any background checks for a visiting priest or deacon, including international background checks that can take up to five weeks to process.
  - To make sure that the visiting priest or deacon is made aware that in the State of Connecticut all clergy are mandated to report orally to the D.C.F. Careline within 12 hours of suspecting that a child has been abused or neglected (800-842-2288).
6. All testimonials of suitability must be signed within six months of the date of the ministerial event(s) to take place in the Diocese of Bridgeport.
7. All background checks must be administered through or approved by the Office of Safe Environment and have been conducted within the last five years.
8. These requirements apply to the celebration of weddings, funerals, Sunday, Holy Day and weekday Masses, ordinations, parish missions, retreats, confessions, baptisms and any act of ministerial function. It also applies to concelebrants as well as principal celebrants.

### 1.3 Diocesan Clergy Ministering Outside the Diocese of Bridgeport

1. Priests of the Diocese of Bridgeport who wish to travel outside of the diocese for ministry and who need a testimonial of suitability should request one from the Office of Clergy and Religious at least four weeks before the ministerial event. In the case of funerals, the request should be made as soon as possible. (See Appendix C: "Request for Testimonials and Statement of Suitability for Diocesan Clergy")
2. Letters of suitability and *celebrates* will only be provided to those priests who are up-to-date with VIRTUS training and a background check (required every 5 years) and who have signed the Executive Summary of the *Safe Environment Handbook*. No exceptions will be made.

1.4 Visiting Bishops: A letter of Suitability for Ministry should be provided to the Office of Clergy Personnel by the Vicar General along with proof of Safe Environment training and a criminal background check.

### 1.5 Seminarians and Candidates for the Diaconate:

#### Renewal Schedule:

Seminarians and Candidates to the Diaconate are required to clear a new background check at the time of their ordination and every five (5) years thereafter.

#### Procedures:

- (a) The Diocesan Director of Vocations must obtain a completed authorization form from all seminarians and is responsible for processing and evaluating all background check results.
- (b) The Vicar for Clergy, or his designee, obtains processes and evaluates all background check results for Candidates for the Diaconate.



- (c) Checks will include: Reference checks; Personality profiling; State Conviction Records; National Crime Registry – searches all state sex offender registries, high crime registries and foreign national's registry; Social Security Number Trace; DMV Records Credit Check; Employment History Verification
- (d) The Director of Vocations provides the adverse action notice to Men in Formation when negative results occur. These records will be maintained by the Director of Vocations for permanent storage.
- (e) All records related to background checks are to be transferred upon ordination to the Office of Clergy Personnel and a new background check will be conducted when the individual is ordained.
- (f) If the person is not ordained, the record will be maintained by the Director of Vocations for permanent storage.

## **2.0 Lay Employees and Lay Volunteers**

### Renewal Schedule:

All Lay Employees are required to complete a criminal background check every five (5) years. All Volunteers who hold a supervisory role or who work in scheduled contact with children or Vulnerable Adult is required to complete a criminal background check every five (5) years. Background checks will always be renewed when there is a gap in service or ministry. For educators, this does not include the summer break. All volunteers who do not work in scheduled contact with children or in a supervisory role are required to complete a criminal background check every ten (10) years.

### Procedures:

- (a) Prior to working or volunteering, the office managing the employee or volunteer will inform the person that a background check is required.
- (b) All Lay Employees and Volunteers must submit a completed and signed written authorization to complete the criminal background check on an automatic renewal schedule at the time of hire or at the time of volunteering.
- (c) All completed authorization forms should be submitted to the Office of Safe Environment (This includes all written authorization forms as well as in a secure electronic format).
- (d) The areas to be investigated for current employees will be based on the position the employee holds. The areas to be investigated for any applicant will be based on the position for which he/she is applying. All searches will include State Conviction Records; National Crime Registry (searches all state sex offender registries) high crime registries; Social Security Number Tracing and foreign national's registry.
  - Positions requiring a specific degree: add Education Verification
  - Positions with Financial Responsibility: add Credit History
  - Positions with driving responsibility: add Motor Vehicle Report
- (e) Results return to the Director of Safe Environment. Employee results will be printed and provided to the Office of Human Resources. Adverse action notices will be sent to employees by the Director of Human Resources.
- (f) After completing the background check, the investigative agency will invoice the Diocese of Bridgeport for all completed background checks.
- (g) Background checks do not transfer from other Dioceses or from other institutions.

**Volunteers:** In all cases, a full name, date of birth and address history is required in order to initiate a volunteer background check search. If multiple results return with the same name and date of birth, the social security number is required for identity purposes in order to consider that person eligible

for volunteering. Volunteers who work with Vulnerable Adults and minors must provide their social security number in the first instance.

### **3.0 School Employees**

#### Renewal Schedule:

School Employees complete a criminal background check through a Diocesan investigative agency every five (5) years. School Employees must also complete the State Fingerprint checks, FBI Fingerprint checks and D.C.F. Child Abuse and Neglect Registry check at time of hire or when there is a gap in service. School Principals are responsible for ensuring that every school employee has completed the fingerprint check and criminal background check before a person begins working or volunteering.

#### Procedures:

- (a) At the time of hire, the Office of the Superintendent will ensure that the applicant completes the fingerprint application and schedules an appointment at CES. The fingerprint appointment must occur no later than 30 days after the hire date. A written authorization form must be requested for all school employees.
- (b) All completed criminal background check authorization forms should be submitted to the Office of Safe Environment. (This includes all written authorization forms as well as in a secure electronic format).
- (c) Return results for all school employee and school volunteer background checks to the Director of Safe Environment. Employee results will be printed and provided to the Office of Human Resources.
- (d) Any checks that divulge information regarding crimes against children or sex crimes will result in the candidate not being eligible for employment or for volunteering. The Director of Safe Environment will notify the Principal/Pastor/Administrator or Site Supervisor of the decision and will send an adverse action notice to the individual with a copy of the report and a copy of the individual's rights. If the individual believes that misinformation exists on the report, they should work through the investigative agency to resolve this and notify the Director of Safe Environment informing them that they are disputing the information.
- (e) For any negative information outside of the USCCB Charter which results in the candidate not being eligible for employment or volunteering, the Office of Human Resources will notify the Principal/Pastor/Administrator or Site Supervisor of the decision and will send an adverse action notice to the individual with a copy of the report and a copy of the individual's rights. If the individual believes that misinformation exists on the report, they should work through the investigative agency to resolve this and notify the Office of Human Resources informing them that they are disputing the information. If a corrected and 'clean' report is obtained, the individual may be eligible for employment or volunteering. If a corrected or 'clean' report is not available, then the decision will stand and the individual is not able to be employed or volunteer.
- (f) After completing the background check, the investigative agency will send the invoice to the Diocese of Bridgeport for checks completed on their behalf. Individual locations will have the ability to review their monthly background check activity.
- (g) All correspondence relative to this process should be filed in the Office of Human Resources and in the Office of Safe Environment.
- (h) All records will be permanently retained in a secure electronic format.

#### **4.0 Independent Contractors, Tenants and Vendors**

All contracts, leases and service agreements will include the language, "Prior to commencing services all employees routinely on the premise will submit to a criminal background check at the independent contractor, tenant or vendor's expense. Acceptance onto the premise is contingent upon successful completion of the check". The independent contractor, tenant or vendor will not place any employee or volunteer in a Diocesan location that has not successfully completed the criminal background check search and will not under any circumstances be placed in employment at a Diocesan location if the person has been convicted of a sex crime or crime against children. If the independent contractor, tenant or vendor does not have a Criminal Background Search service, searches can be completed using the Diocesan investigative agency. All expenses associated with the Diocese conducting the search will be billed back to the Contractor or Vendor. It is the Contractor's or Vendor's responsibility to maintain compliance relative to the Fair Credit Reporting Act and the Consumer Credit Reporting Reform Act of 1996 relative to their employee. All correspondence relative to this process should be retained permanently and filed by year in a separate topic file in the Office of Safe Environment and copied to Office of Legal and Real Estate.

**APPENDICES**

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***Note:** Some terms used in the Appendices and Executive Summaries are defined in the main sections of the Safe Environment Handbook*

## Appendix A

### Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect and Summary of Connecticut Child Abuse Reporting Laws

#### CT DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Child Abuse and Neglect Definitions (see Policy 22-1)

The following are general definitions:

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse / Exploitation
- Emotional Maltreatment – Abuse
- Physical Neglect
- Medial Neglect
- Educational Neglect
- Emotional Neglect
- Moral Neglect

#### **PHYSICAL ABUSE**

**A child may be found to have been physically abused who:**

- has been inflicted with physical injury or injuries other than by accidental means,
- is in a condition which is the result of maltreatment such as, but not limited to, malnutrition, sexual molestation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment or cruel punishment; and/or,
- has injuries at variance with the history given of them.

**Evidence of physical abuse includes:**

- excessive physical punishment
- bruises, scratches, lacerations
- burns, and/or scalds
- reddening or blistering of the tissue through application of heat by fire, chemical substances, cigarettes, matches, electricity, scalding water, friction, etc.
- injuries to bone, muscle, cartilage, ligaments
- fractures, dislocations, sprains, strains, displacements, hematomas, etc.
- head injuries
- internal injuries
- death
- misuse of medical treatments or therapies
- malnutrition related to acts of commission or omission by an established caregiver resulting in a child's malnourished state that can be supported by professional medical opinion
- deprivation of necessities, acts of commission or omission by an established caregiver resulting in physical harm to child
- cruel punishment.

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### **SEXUAL ABUSE / EXPLOITATION**

**Sexual Abuse/Exploitation** is any incident involving a child(ren)'s non-accidental exposure to sexual behavior.

**Evidence of sexual abuse includes, but is not limited to the following:**

- rape
- penetration: digital, penile, or foreign objects
- oral / genital contact
- indecent exposure for the purpose of sexual gratification of the offender, or for purposes of shaming, humiliating, shocking or exerting control over the victim
- incest
- fondling, including kissing, for the purpose of sexual gratification of the offender, or for purposes of shaming, humiliating, shocking or exerting control over the victim
- sexual exploitation, including possession, manufacture, or distribution of child pornography, online enticement of a child for sexual acts, child prostitution, child-sex tourism, unsolicited obscene material sent to a child, or misleading domain name likely to attract a child to an inappropriate website
- coercing or forcing a child to participate in, or be negligently exposed to, pornography and/or sexual behavior
- disease or condition that arises from sexual transmission
- other verbal, written or physical behavior not overtly sexual but likely designed to "groom" a child for future sexual abuse.

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### **EMOTIONAL MALTREATMENT - ABUSE**

**Emotional Maltreatment-Abuse** are: act(s), statement(s), or threats, which

- has had, or is likely to have an adverse impact on the child; and/or,
- interferes with a child's positive emotional development.

**Evidence of emotional maltreatment-abuse includes, but is not limited to, the following:**

- rejecting
- degrading
- isolating and/or victimizing a child by means of cruel, unusual, or excessive methods of discipline
- exposing the child to brutal or intimidating acts or statements.

**Indicators of Adverse Impact of emotional maltreatment-abuse may include, but are not limited to, the following:**

- depression
- withdrawal
- low self-esteem
- anxiety
- fear
- aggression/ passivity
- emotional instability
- sleep disturbances
- somatic complaints with no medical basis

- inappropriate behavior for age or development
  - suicidal ideations or attempts
  - extreme dependence
  - academic regression
  - and/or trust issues
- 

### **PHYSICAL NEGLECT**

#### **A child may be found neglected who:**

- has been abandoned
- is being denied proper care and attention physically, educationally, emotionally, or morally
- is being permitted to live under conditions, circumstances or associations injurious to his well-being
- has been abused.

#### **Evidence of physical neglect includes, but is not limited to:**

- Inadequate food
- Malnutrition
- Inadequate clothing
- Inadequate housing or shelter
- erratic, deviant, or impaired behavior by the person responsible for the child's health, welfare or care; by a person given access to the child; or by a person entrusted with the child's care which adversely impacts the child
- permitting the child to live under conditions, circumstances or associations injurious to his well-being including, but not limited to, the following:
  - substance abuse by caregiver, which adversely impacts the child physically
  - substance abuse by the mother of a newborn child and the newborn has a positive urine or meconium toxicology for drugs
  - psychiatric problem of the caregiver which adversely impacts the child physically
  - exposure to family violence which adversely impacts the child physically
  - exposure to violent events, situations, or persons that would be reasonably judged to compromise a child's physical safety
  - non-accidental, negligent exposure to drug trafficking and/or individuals engaged in the active abuse of illegal substances
  - voluntarily and knowingly entrusting the care of a child to individuals who may be disqualified to provide safe care, e.g. persons who are subject to active protective or restraining orders; persons with past history of violent/drug/sex crimes; persons appearing on the Central Registry
  - non-accidental or negligent exposure to pornography or sexual acts
  - inability to consistently provide the minimum of child-caring tasks
  - inability to provide or maintain a safe living environment
- action/inaction resulting in death
- abandonment
- action/inaction resulting in the child's failure to thrive
- transience
- inadequate supervision:
  - creating or allowing a circumstance in which a child is alone for an excessive period of time given the child's age and cognitive abilities

- holding the child responsible for the care of siblings or others beyond the child's ability
  - failure to provide reasonable and proper supervision of a child given the child's age and cognitive abilities.
- 

### **MEDICAL NEGLECT**

**Medical Neglect** is the unreasonable delay, refusal or failure on the part of the person responsible for the child's health, welfare or care or the person entrusted with the child's care to seek, obtain, and/or maintain those services for necessary medical, dental or mental health care when such person knows, or should reasonably be expected to know, that such actions may have an adverse impact on the child.

#### **Evidence of medical neglect includes, but is not limited to:**

- frequently missed appointments, therapies or other necessary medical and/or mental health treatments
  - withholding or failing to obtain or maintain medically necessary treatment from a child with life-threatening, acute or chronic medical or mental health conditions
  - withholding medically indicated treatment from disabled infants with life threatening conditions.
- 

### **EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT**

**Educational Neglect** occurs when, by action or inaction, the parent or person having control of a child five (5) years of age and older and under eighteen (18) years of age who is not a high school graduate

- fails to register the child in school
  - fails to allow the child to attend school or receive home instruction in accordance with CONN. GEN. STAT. §10-184
  - failure to take appropriate steps to ensure regular attendance at school if the child is registered.
- 

### **EMOTIONAL NEGLECT**

**Emotional Neglect** is the denial of proper care and attention, or failure to respond, to a child's affective needs by the person responsible for the child's health, welfare or care; by the person given access to the child; or by the person entrusted with the child's care which has an adverse impact on the child or seriously interferes with a child's positive emotional development.

#### **Evidence of emotional neglect includes, but is not limited to, the following:**

- inappropriate expectations of the child given the child's developmental level
- failure to provide the child with appropriate support, attention and affection
- permitting the child to live under conditions, circumstances or associations injurious to his well-being including, but not limited to, the following:
  - substance abuse by caregiver, which adversely impacts the child emotionally
  - psychiatric problem of the caregiver, which adversely impacts the child emotionally, and
  - exposure to family violence which adversely impacts the child emotionally.



**Indicators may include, but are not limited to, the following:**

- depression
- withdrawal
- low self-esteem
- anxiety
- fear
- aggression/ passivity
- emotional instability
- sleep disturbances
- somatic complaints with no medical basis
- inappropriate behavior for age or development
- suicidal ideations or attempts
- extreme dependence
- academic regression
- trust issues.

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**MORAL NEGLECT**

**Moral Neglect:** Exposing, allowing, or encouraging the child to engage in illegal or reprehensible activities by the person responsible for the child's health, welfare or care or person given access or person entrusted with the child's care.

**Evidence of Moral Neglect includes but is not limited to:**

- stealing
- using drugs and/or alcohol, and
- involving a child in the commission of a crime, directly or by caregiver indifference.

**QUESTIONS**

**Q. How do I Respond to a Child who Reports Abuse to Me?**

**A.** Tell the child that you believe them and that you are going to contact people who can help. Respect the privacy of the child. The child will need to tell their story in detail later, so don't press the child for details. Remember, you need only suspect abuse to make a report. Don't display horror, shock, or disapproval of parents, child, or the situation. Don't place blame or make judgments about the parent or child. Believe the child if she/he reports sexual abuse. It is rare for a child to lie about sexual abuse.

**Q. What Information Must Be Reported?**

**A.** When making a report, a reporter is required to provide the following information, if known:

- names and addresses of the child and his parents or responsible caregiver(s)
- child's age and gender
- nature and extent of injury, maltreatment or neglect
- approximate date and time the injury, maltreatment or neglect occurred
- the circumstances in which the injuries, maltreatment or neglect became known to the reporter
- previous injury, maltreatment or neglect of the child or siblings
- name of the person suspected to have caused the injury, maltreatment or neglect
- any action taken to treat or help the child
- any other information the reporter believes would be helpful

Mandated reporters are required to report or cause a report to be made when, in the ordinary course of their employment or profession, they have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child under the age of 18 has been abused, neglected or is placed in imminent risk of serious harm. (Connecticut General Statutes §17a-101a)

Child abuse occurs where a child has had physical injury inflicted upon him or her other than by accidental means, has injuries at variance with history given of them, or is in a condition resulting in maltreatment, such as, but not limited to, malnutrition, sexual molestation or exploitation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment or cruel punishment. (Connecticut General Statutes §46b-120)

Child neglect occurs where a child has been abandoned, is being denied proper care and attention physically, emotionally, or morally, or is being permitted to live under conditions, circumstances or associations injurious to his well-being. (Connecticut General Statutes §46b-120)

Mandated reporters who, outside the ordinary course of their employment or profession, have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child under the age of 18 is in imminent risk of being abused or has been abused or neglected, can and should make a report to the **Careline (see below)**.

**Q. Who do I Need to Contact if I Suspect Child Abuse?**

**A.** The Department has a single point of contact statewide for the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect. **The Child Abuse and Neglect Careline** operates 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Anyone who suspects that a child has been abused or neglected or is in danger of abuse or neglect is strongly encouraged to call the Careline. D.C.F. is required to tape record all reports to the Careline 1-800-842-2288.

If you as a parent are concerned that your child has been abused or neglected, for example, in a day-care home or center, in school or in any other out-of-home care setting, please call the Careline.

If you would like information about services available to you and your children in your area of the state, please call the D.C.F. Information and Referral Services through the **Careline at 1-800-842-2288**. The Information and Referral line is available from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

**HOW TO REPORT**

Reporters must report orally to the Department of Children and Families' (D.C.F.) Careline 1-800-842-2288 or a law enforcement agency within 12 hours of suspecting that a child has been abused or neglected and must submit a **written report (D.C.F.-136 form)** to D.C.F. within 48 hours of making the oral report. D.C.F. is required to tape record all reports to the Careline.

Special reporting requirements may apply for staff members of a public or private institution or facility that cares for such child, or a public or private school.

Police must report to D.C.F. immediately upon receipt of any oral report of abuse or neglect.

Upon receipt of any oral report alleging sexual abuse or serious physical abuse or serious neglect, D.C.F. must report to the appropriate state or local law enforcement agency within 12 hours.

**Q. Can I be Sued if I Make a Report?**

**A.** Anyone participating in good faith in the making of a report of child abuse and who has reasonable grounds for making the report, shall have immunity from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed with respect to the making or content of such report. Any such

participant shall have the same immunity with respect to participating in any judicial proceeding resulting from such report.

Immunity from civil or criminal liability is granted to people who make required reports in good faith. Immunity is also granted to people who in good faith have not reported. However, failure to report could result in fines, which range from \$500 to \$2,500 and the individual will be required to participate in an educational and training program. In addition, mandated reporters could also be sued for damages if further injury is caused to the child because they did not act.

Anyone who knowingly makes a false report of child abuse or neglect shall be fined up to \$2,000 or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both. The identity of any such person shall be disclosed to the appropriate law enforcement agency and to the perpetrator of the alleged abuse.

Employers may not discharge, discriminate or retaliate against an employee for making a good faith report or testifying in an abuse or neglect proceeding. The Attorney General can bring a court action against any employer who violates this provision, and the court can assess a civil penalty of up to \$2,500 plus other equitable relief.

**Q. What Happens After I Report?**

**A.** D.C.F. is responsible for immediately evaluating and classifying all reports of suspected abuse/neglect/imminent risk. If the report contains information to warrant an investigation, D.C.F. must make its best effort to begin an investigation within two hours if there is an imminent risk of physical harm to a child or another emergency; and within three days for all other reports. In all cases, D.C.F. must complete the investigation in 45 calendar days.

When conducting a child abuse or neglect investigation, D.C.F. or a law enforcement agency must coordinate activities to minimize the number of interviews with any child.

D.C.F. must obtain consent from the parent, guardian or person responsible for the child's care for any interview, unless D.C.F. has reason to believe such person or a member of the child's household is the alleged perpetrator. When such consent is not required, the interview must be conducted in the presence of a 'disinterested Adult' (typically, a person who is impartial and has no self-interest in the case). If a disinterested Adult is not available after reasonable search and immediate access is necessary to protect the child from imminent risk of serious harm, D.C.F. or a law enforcement agency will still interview the child.

If, after the investigation has been completed, serious physical abuse or sexual abuse is substantiated, D.C.F. must notify the local police, and either the Chief State's Attorney/designee or a state's attorney in the judicial district where the child lives or in which the abuse occurred. A copy of the investigation report must also be sent.

**Q. Will My Report be Confidential?**

**A.** Mandated reporters are required to give their name when they make a report to D.C.F., however, reporters may request anonymity to protect their privacy. This means that D.C.F. would not disclose their name or identity unless mandated to do so by law (Connecticut General Statutes, Sections 17a-28 and 17a-101). Unless a reporter gives written consent, his or her name will not be disclosed except to:

- a D.C.F. employee
- a law enforcement officer
- an appropriate state's attorney
- an appropriate assistant attorney general

- a judge and all necessary parties in a court proceeding
- a state child care licensing agency, executive director of any institution, school or facility or superintendent of schools

If D.C.F. suspects or knows that the reporter knowingly makes a false report, his or her identity shall be disclosed to the appropriate law enforcement agency and the person may be subject to the penalty described in the next section.

**Q. Do I Have to Notify the Parents that I Made a Report?**

**A.** Mandated reporters are under no legal obligation to inform parents that they have made a report to D.C.F. about their child. However, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary and/or beneficial to do so.

- When a child is suspected of being abused, neglected or placed at imminent risk of serious harm by a member of the staff of a private or public school or an institution that cares for the child, the person in charge of the school or facility must notify the child’s parent or other person responsible for the child’s care that a report has been made. It is D.C.F.’s responsibility to notify the head of such school, facility or institution that a report has been made.
- Health care professionals may need to talk with parents to assess the cause of the child’s injury(ies). Mental health professionals or members of the clergy may want to talk with the parents to offer support and guidance.

However, in cases of serious physical abuse or sexual abuse, it may not be wise to talk with parents before reporting the case to D.C.F.. This may put the child at greater risk and could interfere with a potential criminal investigation.

**Q: Who is a Mandated Reporter?**

**A:** The following persons shall be mandated reporters, in accordance with CT Statutes chapter 319a - Child Welfare, Sec. 17a-101:

- (1) any licensed physician or surgeon
- (2) any resident physician or intern in any hospital in this state, whether or not so licensed
- (3) any registered nurse
- (4) any licensed practical nurse
- (5) any medical examiner
- (6) any dentist
- (7) any dental hygienist
- (8) any psychologist
- (9) any school employee - “school employee” means:

- A teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional or coach employed by a local or regional board of education or a private elementary, middle or high school or working in a public or private elementary, middle or high school;
- any other person who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students (*i.e. public and private school bus drivers*) and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in
  - a public elementary, middle or high school, pursuant to a contract with the local or regional board of education, or
  - a private elementary, middle or high school, pursuant to a contract with the supervisory agent of such private school.)

- (10) any social worker
- (11) any person who holds or is issued a coaching permit by the State Board of Education, is a coach of intramural or interscholastic athletics and is eighteen years of age or older
- (12) any individual who is employed as a coach or director of youth athletics and is eighteen years of age or older
- (13) any individual who is employed as a coach or director of a private youth sports organization, league or team and is eighteen years of age or older
- (14) any paid administrator, faculty, staff, athletic director, athletic coach or athletic trainer employed by a public or private institution of higher education who is eighteen years of age or older, excluding student employees
- (15) any police officer
- (16) any juvenile or Adult probation officer
- (17) any juvenile or Adult parole officer
- (18) any member of the clergy
- (19) any pharmacist
- (20) any physical therapist
- (21) any optometrist
- (22) any chiropractor
- (23) any podiatrist
- (24) any mental health professional
- (25) any physician assistant
- (26) any person who is a licensed or certified emergency medical services provider
- (27) any person who is a licensed or certified alcohol and drug counselor
- (28) any person who is a licensed marital and family therapist
- (29) any person who is a sexual assault counselor or a domestic violence counselor
- (30) any person who is a licensed professional counselor
- (31) any person who is a licensed foster parent
- (32) any person paid to care for a child in any public or private facility, child day care center, group day care home or family day care home licensed by the state
- (33) any employee of the Department of Children and Families
- (34) any employee of the Department of Public Health, any employee of the Office of Early Childhood who is responsible for the licensing of child day care centers, group day care homes, family day care homes or youth camps
- (35) any paid youth camp director or assistant director
- (36) the Child Advocate and any employee of the Office of the Child Advocate
- (37) any family relations counselor, family relations counselor trainee or family services supervisor employed by the Judicial Department.
- (38) Added July 1, 2018, "any person who is a licensed behavior analyst"

**Appendix B**  
**Reporting Suspected Abuse in the Diocese of Bridgeport**

In the Diocese of Bridgeport, we encourage every person who has information about any form of abuse or neglect, knowledge of someone in possession of child pornography or suspected boundary violations toward minors or Vulnerable Adults, to report this information to the Diocese of Bridgeport and to Civil Authorities. Clergy, Candidates for Ordination, Religious Sisters and Brothers, Employees, Volunteers, Tenants and Independent Contractors are **required** to report this information within 12-hours of becoming aware of it.

***Immediately call:***

**Erin Neil, L.C.S.W., Director of Safe Environment and Victim Assistance Coordinator Office:  
(203) 416-1406, Cell: (203) 650-3265, [eneil@diobpt.org](mailto:eneil@diobpt.org) or Michael Tintrup, L.C.S.W., Victim  
Assistance Counselor: (203) 241-0987**

**AND**

**The CT Department of Children and Family (D.C.F.) Child Abuse and Neglect Careline  
1-800-842-2288 within twelve (12) hours of becoming aware of the information**

**AND IF DIRECTED**

**Notify the police in the town where the incident occurred.**

**Immediately call (911) if there is imminent risk of harm to any person.**

***Third Party Reporting: Survivor and Witness Hotline 1-833-990-0004  
or [www.lighthouse-services.com/diobpt](http://www.lighthouse-services.com/diobpt)***

**To Report Sexual Misconduct by a U.S. Bishop, call 1-800-276-1562 /  
<https://reportbishopabuse.org> or call Kathleen D. Nowosadko, the province's local reporting  
individual: (860) 541-6475**

**For a report involving a Vulnerable Adult, call the police in the town  
where the incident occurred.**

***SUSPECTED BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS OR SUSPECTED  
GROOMING BEHAVIORS TOWARD MINORS OR A VULNERABLE ADULT***

If you have any concern about the safety of a child or Vulnerable Adult or if you have observed an early warning sign of inappropriate conduct or a violation of the Safe Environment policies, please call the Safe Environment Office with what you know. Suspected grooming behaviors toward minors must also be reported to the police and to the D.C.F. Care-line.

***(See Appendix H for examples of grooming behaviors and early warning signs of abuse)***

## Appendix C

### Guidelines for Trips, Events and Electronic Communication with Minors and Permission Form for Direct Electronic Communication with Minors

The Diocese of Bridgeport is committed to providing a safe environment for children within all diocesan activities and ministries both in person and while using technology.

For purposes of these guidelines, Cleared Adults with oversight or supervisory authority over minors participating in a particular youth event or activity share in the responsibility and authority of the parish or diocesan staff person in ensuring these guidelines are followed. Further, specifically for these guidelines, an eighteen-year-old who is still in high school is considered a minor.

#### I. RATIOS

Every event where minors, youth and Vulnerable Adults are present should go through a review process in order to determine Cleared Adult to minor ratios. An activity that is open to the public or held in a public space may require a smaller ratio and increased supervision than may be needed for a closed venue with Adults monitoring doorways and hallways.

The minimum required ratios of Cleared Adult/Minor

##### A. For on-site events:

- 1:7 for High School students (always at least 2 Cleared Adults)
- 1:5 for Middle School students (always at least 2 Cleared Adults)
- 1:10 Large single space gatherings and events where all entrances and exits are securely monitored: 2 Cleared Adults for every 20 students (i.e. School dances) (always at least 2 Cleared Adults in each hallway)

##### B. For out of state and international trips:

- Determined on a case by case basis

#### II. LIABILITY FORMS

The Diocese of Bridgeport liability and waiver form must be signed by all Adults participating in any trip involving minors. The student liability form must be signed by parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of minors prior to each trip. Offsite and overnight events must have a separate liability form for each event. All liability forms and all Safe Environment records must be filed permanently (at the school, parish or sponsoring diocese) and never destroyed.

#### III. EVENTS AND TRIPS WITH MINORS AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

##### 1. Onsite: Day Events

##### “In House” (including regular Youth Group meetings)

- a. Make sure you have at least 2 Cleared Adults (even if it's only one minor)
- b. If there will be other Adults at the event:

- Respect the ratios Cleared Adult/minor.
- Always stay with the minors, they should not be out of sight or unsupervised.
- Minors may not supervise other minors, be sure that all supervisors are Cleared Adults.

## **2. Offsite: Day Trips and Transportation**

Buses are the preferred mode of transportation. If a bus is not possible, indicate “provide own transportation” on the permission slip and meet the minor at the location where the event will take place.

If a carpool is organized, verify that all of the following are in place:

- Complete the driver checklist and all necessary training for drivers and volunteers through Catholic Mutual insurance company
- All drivers must be Cleared Adults. There must always be at least 2 Cleared Adults in each car at all times
- Drivers must show proof of a valid license and insurance card to the trip coordinator
- Trips must begin and end at a school or parish location
- At the end of an activity, two Adults must remain with the minor(s) until after the last minor is picked up by their parent or legal guardian

For short distance day trips, one Cleared Adult may be in a vehicle as long as there are two or more minors at all times in that same vehicle and there is a caravan of other vehicles leaving and arriving together. Ratios for Cleared Adult/Minors must be respected.

## **3. Overnight Events**

- A written proposal must be submitted to the Office of Superintendent for all Catholic School overnight trips.
- The Code of Conduct applies to all Diocesan sponsored parish, school or institutional overnight camping, overnight retreats, overnight trips or other scheduled and approved events of this nature.
- Male and female minors will be segregated as well as Adults unless they are married.
- Under no circumstances will a minor stay alone in a room.
- Curfews will be imposed and pairs of male and female Cleared Adults, females checking females and males checking males will perform curfew bed checks. There will always be two Cleared Adults conducting bed checks.
- Alert supervision is required for overnight activities involving minors and the following standards must be in place:
  - 2 Cleared Adults should be present in the vicinity
  - Males and females should sleep in separate rooms and preferably, in separate areas.

## **3. Accommodations**

### **Dorms and Hotel Rooms**

Alert supervision (2 Cleared Adults) at all times

- In the case of an emergency or when performing routine checks, Adults can enter the rooms where the minors are staying, following the two “Cleared Adult” requirement.



- There are inherent risks involved with the use of tents. Tents are strongly discouraged. Adults and minors sleeping in the same room or sleeping area is generally prohibited. Unique accommodations or situations may be individually presented in writing to the Office of Safe Environment for consideration.
- We recognize that changes to accommodations and emergency situations may arise which no person could anticipate. Ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to apply the safeguards in these policies and to place the safety and protection of the children above all else. It is important to do everything possible to protect the Adults from even the appearance of impropriety when these changes occur.

#### **4. Out-of-State or International Trips**

1. Out-of-state and International trips require early planning and prior approval.

- A written proposal must be submitted to the Office of the Superintendent for all Catholic School trips.
- Parishes and all other groups should contact the Office of Safe Environment for out of state and international trips.
- In every written proposal state the purpose of the activity, the date and location of the planned activity and include a detailed description of transportation, supervision, staffing ratios and overnight accommodation. Every proposal should indicate how the trip meets all Safe Environment requirements for the Diocese of Bridgeport.
- No monies or deposits should be exchanged and no documents should be executed until final written approval is received. If approval is received, all criminal background checks and the VIRTUS training requirement must be completed and verified in advance.

#### **5. Swimming**

There are risks involved to Adults and children with activities that involve swimming. An abundance of caution must be used in any event or trip that may involve swimming. In all cases, a certified Life Guard must be present at all times and there must be separate showering rooms and changing areas for Adults and minors. Proper swimming attire must be worn at all times.

#### **IV. GUIDELINES FOR THE SAFE USE OF TECHNOLOGY**

The universal principles provided for the safe use of technology are to be applied prudently and judiciously in the event an update has not occurred before an advance in technology. Technology refers to phones, computers, electronic tablets, portable electronic gaming systems, cameras, online websites, blogs, portable listening devices or any other electronic tools and equipment used to communicate information.

All interaction with youth, in person or through any means of communication must be transparent at all times. At least two or more unrelated Cleared Adults should *have access* wherever possible to any communications, used to communicate with minors (physical or virtual). Before any interaction occurs between a Cleared Adult and a minor through any means of technology, the minor and his parents/guardians should sign the “Permission Form for Direct Electronic Communication with Minors” (*see attached*).

## **A. SOCIAL MEDIA:**

1. Social media websites must be established under the name of the parish, school or youth program. In circumstances where a social network is currently established under a person's name and is used to communicate with youth for parish youth ministry, the site must be approved for use by the pastor and must become an official parish site by updating the security settings to ensure full transparency.
2. Two Cleared Adults must serve as moderators of all social networks used to communicate with youth. Moderators must ensure that the social media vehicle complies with this Code of Conduct and all Diocesan policies. These Adults must have full access to the social media page (both have the password) so that it can be regulated and monitored to ensure that no personal information is posted therein.
3. All information displayed on a school, parish or diocesan sponsored social networking site must reflect the Catholic faith and should not call any teaching of the Church into question. This includes, and is not limited to, language, photos, songs, videos, bulletins, blogs, podcasts, and applications.
4. No students under the age of 18 or still in High School should be in any school employee or volunteer's friends list on any **personal** social networking site other than a family member or other Adult who is specifically listed on a minor's emergency contact list. Personnel may not send a "friend request" to a student or accept a "friend request" from a student on any **personal** social networking site or internet blog.
5. Site must have privacy settings in place. Regularly check to be sure that privacy settings did not change due to system updates.
6. Social networking sites used to communicate with minors should have, the "no tagging" option selected. In photographs of youth activities, youth should not be "tagged," or identified by name in the photograph.
7. Blogs should not be used to conduct or promote outside business and/or personal activities, and should not divulge any personal information regarding those being ministered to.
8. Information obtained through online communication concerning illegal activity involving minors must be immediately reported to the appropriate civil and diocesan authorities in accordance with Diocesan reporting policies and Connecticut mandatory reporting laws.
9. A parent or legal guardian will be provided with the opportunity to exclude their children's photo and personal information from any public posting.
10. When posting photographs of minors/young people, even with the consent of their parent, an abundance of caution must be taken due to facial recognition technology. Use only a first name when posting photos electronically and only post these when absolutely necessary.
11. All information posted on an approved social network (written as well as photos) should be in accord with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Application/features and any posting should reflect Catholic values.

12. The diocesan, parish or school logo, seal or name cannot be used on any electronic medium without prior permission from the respective authority.
13. Employees and volunteers should understand that there is no expectation of privacy on official diocesan, parish or school email accounts. School employees are always expected to use official email accounts to communicate with minors and follow the school administrator policy.
14. Personnel shall not communicate with minors through personal electronic mediums. This does not refer to an approved and monitored social network site that is established by a school or parish or if the settings are consistent with an official school or parish social networking site. The distinction is public vs. private.
15. Personnel are specifically prohibited from:
  - One-on-one video (example: Face Time) or other personal chat room interaction between Adult Personnel and minors.
  - Private messaging on any personal website belonging to or hosted by a student.
  - Posting private messages to a minor or student on a personal website that is not an official school or parish e-mail account, discussion board or website.

#### **B. THE USE OF CELLULAR PHONES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY and TEXTING**

Pastors or designated Personnel should review and approve all requests by youth ministers to communicate with a minor through a personal cell phone. If the pastor or designated Personnel has approved the use of personal cell phone for communicating with minors, a written agreement for acceptable use must be in place. The agreement must be signed by the parent or legal guardian of the minor. When sending text messages or instant messages to an unrelated minor(s) via personal cell phone or a personal email account, one of the following safeguards must be in place:

1. A parent or another Adult who is in full compliance with Safe Environment policies is included in the communication; or
2. The minor is a family member; or
3. Permission is provided in writing by a parent or legal guardian for direct communication with their child through electronic means.

***(See attached Permission Form for Direct Electronic Communication with Minors)***

**THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT**

**Permission Form for Direct Electronic Communication with Minors and Vulnerable Adults**

**NAME OF PARISH/ORGANIZATION:** \_\_\_\_\_ **(TOWN)** \_\_\_\_\_

In the Diocese of Bridgeport, parents and/or legal guardians will be copied into **all** electronic communications except those that occur on an official social networking site or online community administered and maintained by the Diocese, Parish, or School pursuant to the terms of diocesan policy and any additional forms of communication as approved by parents or guardians on this form. This form allows a parent or legal guardian to specifically authorize Adult emergency contacts and other Adults within their parish or organization to communicate through specific electronic means directly with a minor child. Priests, Deacons, Lay Employees and Volunteers must uphold the standards for safe and transparent communication as outlined in the Safe Environment Handbook by either forwarding or including another Cleared Adult on the communications.

**Pastor or his designee completes this section:**

**(NAME)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Parish utilizes the following Official forms of electronic communication to communicate directly with minors:**

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Social networking site: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent or Guardian Completes: (Please check one)**

(  ) You **MAY NOT** contact my child directly. (Sign and return).

(  ) You **MAY** contact my child directly. (Sign, complete all sections and return).

**In addition to the above forms of direct communication used by the parish, I further authorize the following Adults to communicate directly with my minor child:**

Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**All Adults on the above emergency contact list may communicate with my child directly:**

Phone call / voice message to this telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

SMS / text message to this telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

Social networking site sponsored by group named \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**I understand that the Parish and the Diocese of Bridgeport is unable to monitor direct electronic communication between Adults and minors. I agree to discuss with my child the risks associated with direct forms of electronic communication. I agree to immediately report to civil authorities, to the Pastor and to the Office of Safe Environment any suspected risk of harm or abuse involving a minor as well as inappropriate use of technology by a member of the Clergy, Religious Sister or Brother, Men in Formation, Lay Employee, Volunteer or Independent Contractor.**

**Name of Minor Child(ren): \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_**  
*(Please Print)*

**Name of Parent or Legal Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_**  
*(Please Print)*

**Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_**

**Acknowledgement of Receipt**

**Guidelines for Trips, Events and Electronic Communication with Minors**

**On \_\_\_\_\_, I was given a copy of the Diocese of Bridgeport’s Guidelines for Trips, Events and Electronic Communication involving Minors**

**I have read this policy and I understand the sections of this document that apply to me. I agree to conduct myself in accordance with its terms.**

**Name: (Please Print) \_\_\_\_\_**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Location(s) where you work or volunteer in the Diocese of Bridgeport):**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix D

### Summary of Safe Environment Requirements and Schedule of Implementation

Pastors, School Principals, and Diocesan Program Directors are responsible for ensuring that each of their Employees, Volunteers, Tenants, Vendors and Independent Contractors under their supervision (18 and older) complete the following:

1. Register at <https://www.virtusonline.org/virtus/>; attend *VIRTUS. Protecting God's Children* awareness training; complete re-certification and continuing education as required.
2. Complete ongoing criminal background checks as required.
3. Receive a copy of the Safe Environment Handbook and sign the Executive Summary that applies to them. A new executive summary must be signed when there is a change in responsibility, change in ministry or a change in the person's location.

Each location must request proof of training attendance and obtain background check authorization for all Personnel. All of the above requirements must be tracked through the VIRTUS system. Each location must designate a local Safe Environment coordinator to assist with local implementation and tracking of all Safe Environment requirements and this individual must have access to the local VIRTUS database.

VIRTUS Training and background checks are required every five (5) years for all Clergy, Lay Employees and Volunteers who are in scheduled contact with children. Annual online continuing education opportunities and instructions will be posted on the Diocesan website [www.bridgeportdiocese.com](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.com) under Safe Environment. VIRTUS Training and background checks are required every ten (10) years for volunteers who do not have scheduled contact with children and do not supervise others.

To register: [www.virtusonline.org](http://www.virtusonline.org). Select the word **REGISTRATION** and select **BRIDGEPORT DIOCESE** as your organization. If your information changes, select **UPDATE MY ACCOUNT** or contact the **VIRTUS helpdesk 1-888-847-8870** to have a VIRTUS training record transferred to a new location.

**Minor employees** (under 18) must always work under the supervision of two Adults who are in full compliance with Safe Environment policies. Catholic Schools are required to provide every student K-12 the opportunity to attend Safe Environment training annually utilizing *Think First and StaySafe*, Child Lures Prevention Program in addition to technology safety utilizing [www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org). Parents of students enrolled in religious education are offered Safe Environment training to supplement the programs that their child receives through the State of Connecticut Healthy and Balanced Living Curriculum.

All young Adults and Adults (18 and older) working and volunteering in any capacity (full-time, part-time, per-diem), including Personnel who do not have scheduled contact with children, are required to complete VIRTUS training and a criminal background check. Registration through the VIRTUS website is required. It is recommended that all current and future policies related to Safe Environment programs be placed on the official school, parish or program website.

**Appendix E**

**Parish Safe Environment Self-Audit and Letter (Pastor/Administrator)**

AUDIT YEAR \_\_\_\_\_ USCCB THE CHARTER FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

***Letter of Safe Environment Compliance***

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

This letter is to verify that \_\_\_\_\_ Parish, \_\_\_\_\_ (**town**) in the Diocese of Bridgeport remains in full compliance with the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and in full compliance with the Safe Environment policies of the Diocese of Bridgeport. A criminal background check and awareness training as required is complete for all Clergy, Lay Employees and Volunteers over the age of 18 in our parish.

Parents are offered the opportunity to attend Safe Environment training through the Diocese of Bridgeport to supplement the Safe Environment training their child receives through the public school system.

The total number of all Adult volunteers who were active in our parish between

7/1/\_\_\_\_ -6/30/\_\_\_\_ was \_\_\_\_\_.

From this total number of Adult volunteers, # \_\_\_\_\_ work in direct contact with children.

All Adults who work or volunteer in our parish are listed on the VIRTUS website.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Pastor**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Parish Safe Environment Coordinator**  
***(Where applicable)***



**Year:** \_\_\_\_\_ **SAFE ENVIRONMENT AUDIT (PARISHES) Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**THE USCCB CHARTER FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN and YOUNG PEOPLE**

**PARISH/TOWN:** \_\_\_\_\_ **PASTOR:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Director of Religious Education:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone/Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parish Safe Environment Coordinator(s):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone/ Email** \_\_\_\_\_

*Is this the same person who conducts the background checks for your parish? Y / N?*

*If No who processes the criminal background checks for volunteers and employees at your parish? Background Check Coordinator* \_\_\_\_\_

THIS DOCUMENT IS TO VERIFY THAT OUR PARISH REMAINS IN FULL COMPLIANCE WITH THE USCCB CHARTER FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE and IN FULL COMPLIANCE WITH SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICIES OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT.

- All Adult Employees and Volunteers have cleared a criminal **Background check** as required (Includes full-time, part-time, per diem and substitutes).
- All of the Adult Employees and Volunteers completed **VIRTUS, Protecting God's Children for Adults** and continuing education as required (Includes full-time, part-time, and substitutes).
- All Employees and Volunteers signed the Executive Summary which applies to them for The Diocese of Bridgeport **Safe Environment Handbook**
- Information on Reporting Suspected Abuse of a Minor is posted in a public location.
- Children are offered Safe Environment training to supplement the curriculum in their public school.

**WHAT IS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF ADULT VOLUNTEERS IN YOUR PARISH**  
(i.e., Ushers, Eucharistic Ministers, Choir, Lectors, Catechists, Youth ministers etc.): # \_\_\_\_\_

**How many of the total number of volunteers in your parish work in direct contact with children in:**

**# Religious Education** \_\_\_\_\_ **# Youth Ministry** \_\_\_\_\_

All Adults who work or volunteer in our parish are listed on the VIRTUS database.

**Signature of the Pastor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of the Safe Environment Coordinator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of the D.R.E.:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix F**

**School Safe Environment Self-Audit and Letter (Principal)**

AUDIT YEAR \_\_\_\_\_ USCCB THE CHARTER FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

***Letter of Safe Environment Compliance***

This letter is to verify that \_\_\_\_\_ (*school*), \_\_\_\_\_ (*town*) in the Diocese of Bridgeport remains in full compliance with the *USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and in full compliance with the Safe Environment policies of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

A criminal background check and VIRTUS training as required is complete for all Adult Employees, Religious Sisters and Brothers, Lay Employees and Volunteers (Full-time, Part-Time and Per-Diem).

Every student is provided with the opportunity to attend Safe Environment training annually and parents are provided with an opportunity to preview the program in advance of classroom instruction. Every new parent to the school is provided with information on the Safe Environment programs through a parent guide or a brochure and a letter home. Any parent who chooses to opt-out their child from training is permitted to do so as long as they provide this to you in writing in advance of the classroom instruction.

The total number of Adult volunteers this school year: # \_\_\_\_\_

All Adults who work or volunteer in our school are listed on the VIRTUS database.

**Signature of the Principal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of the School Environments Coordinator:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*(If applicable)*

**Safe Environment Audit for Catholic Schools**

YEAR: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS OF SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_

TRAINING DATE (S): \_\_\_\_\_

PRINCIPAL: \_\_\_\_\_ FACILITATOR: \_\_\_\_\_

**TRAINING DATE SCHEDULED FOR THE NEXT SCHOOL YEAR:**

**NAME OF PROGRAM** *(Select the training that applies to your school)*

\_\_\_ Think First and Stay Safe Program (Grades K-8)

\_\_\_ Personal Safety Training (9-12)

**# STUDENTS ENROLLED** (Not including Pre-K) \_\_\_\_\_ **# OPT-OUTS** \_\_\_\_\_

Did you provide parents with an opportunity to preview the program in advance of classroom instruction? ***(Please circle one) Y / N***

**\*\*\*PLEASE ATTACH ALL SIGNED OPT-OUT LETTERS FROM PARENTS TO THIS FORM**  
***Please keep a copy of these letters at your school.*** Parental Opt-out forms must be returned to the Diocese of Bridgeport Office of Safe Environment.

**# STUDENTS ABSENT** \_\_\_\_\_

Did training take place last year for these students through a Fairfield County Public school or a Catholic School? ***(Please circle one) Y / N***

If no, please review the information that was presented in the classroom with the student or students that have not completed Safe Environment training due to absence.

Did you provide each parent with a letter and information about the training in advance ***(Please circle one) Y / N***

Did you provide any additional safety education programs for students at your school this year? ***(Please circle one) Y / N***

Please include a brief description of any additional programs:

**Signature of the Principal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Facilitator:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G

### Code of Conduct for Clergy and Men in Formation

Clergy are held to higher standards of behavior than other church Personnel and are required to comply with the standards of behavior included in this Code of Conduct; they are also expected to avoid even the appearance of impropriety both inside and outside the scope of their ministry. This Code of Conduct applies to all Clergy and Men in Formation since they aspire to ordination.

**I. Sacramental Confidentiality must apply to everything in this Code of Conduct.** All of these obligations listed in the document are independent of the confidentiality of the confessional. Under NO circumstances can there be any disclosure – even indirect disclosure – of information received through the confessional. The Code of Conduct provides a set of standards in our ministry to minors. Violations of these standards should be reported to the appropriate authorities.

Responsibility for adherence to this Code of Conduct rests with the individual.

#### 1.0 Pastoral Counseling

1.1 Clergy and Men in Formation, when acting as Pastoral Counselors or Spiritual Directors shall not step beyond their competence in counseling situations and will refer clients to other professionals when appropriate.

1.2 Clergy and Men in Formation, when acting as Pastoral Counselors should carefully consider the possible consequences before entering into a counseling relationship with someone with whom they have a pre-existing relationship (i.e., employee, professional colleague, friend, or other pre-existing relationship).

1.3 Clergy and Men in Formation must never engage in sexual intimacies with the persons they counsel. This includes consensual and nonconsensual contact, forced physical contact, physical contact that can be misconstrued and inappropriate sexual comments.

1.4 Clergy and Men in Formation must maintain clear, appropriate boundaries in all counseling relationships.

1.5 It is suggested that Clergy and Men in Formation maintain a log of the times and places of sessions with each person counseled for their own protection.

## **2.0 Confidentiality**

2.1 Information disclosed to Clergy or Men in Formation during the course of counseling, advising, or spiritual direction shall be held in the strictest confidence possible. However, none of the obligations stated in this Code of Conduct supersedes the confidentiality of the confessional.

- If there is clear and imminent danger to the client or to others, the Clergy Member and Men in Formation may disclose only the information necessary to protect the parties affected and to prevent harm.
- Before disclosure is made, if feasible, the Clergy and Men in Formation should inform the person being counseled about the disclosure and the potential consequences.

2.2. Clergy and Men in Formation should discuss the nature of confidentiality and its limits with each person in counseling.

2.3 Clergy and Men in Formation should keep minimal records of the content of sessions, if any record is necessary.

2.4 While counseling a minor, if Clergy or Men in Formation discover that there is a threat to the welfare of the minor, report that information to D.C.F. and Family Services or to the police within 12 hours of becoming aware of the information.

## **3.0 Conduct with Youth**

3.1. Steps must be taken to the extent possible to ensure that two or more Adults are present when clergy and Men in Formation are working with youth.

3.2 Physical contact with youth can be misconstrued and should occur (a) only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and (b) never in private.

3.3. Clergy and Men in Formation must refrain from the illegal possession and/or illegal use of drugs and/or alcohol at all times and they should not use alcohol when ministering to youth.

3.4 Clergy and Men in Formation should not allow minors to stay overnight in the cleric's private accommodations or residence unless the minor is a family member.

3.5 Clergy and Men in Formation should not provide shared, private, overnight accommodation for minors who are non-family members, including, but not limited to, accommodations in any Church-owned facility, private residence, hotel room, or any other place where there is no other Adult supervision present.

- At all times, Clergy and Men in Formation should protect all parties from the appearance of impropriety and from all risk of harm.

## **4.0 Sexual Conduct**

Clerics and Men in Formation must not, for sexual gain or intimacy, exploit the trust placed in them by the faith community.

4.1 Clerics and Men in Formation who are committed to a celibate lifestyle are called to be an example of celibate chastity in all relationships at all times.

4.2 Allegations of sexual misconduct that are learned outside the seal of confession should be taken seriously and reported to civil authorities. Clergy are considered mandated reporters in Connecticut. Clerics should be familiar with these regulations and the mandatory reporting requirements both within the Diocese of Bridgeport and in Connecticut. Clergy should follow those mandates in each instance and must fully cooperate in any investigation involving suspected abuse of a minor.

4.3 Clergy and Men in Formation should never visit pornographic websites or participate in interactive websites for the purpose of initiating sexual contacts, live or virtual.

4.4 It is illegal to possess or view child pornography in any form and it is the policy of the Diocese of Bridgeport to report any suspicion of child pornography to the police and to the diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator immediately upon becoming aware.

## **5.0 Harassment**

Clerics and Men in Formation must not engage in any harassment of staff, volunteers, or parishioners and must not tolerate such harassment by other Church staff or volunteers. See Section III of the Safe Environment Handbook: Anti-Harassment Policy.

## **6.0 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 Under the Diocesan Safe Environment programs in accordance with the *USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, Safe Environment training records must be tracked and maintained onsite at the parish permanently for all Lay employees, Lay volunteers and Independent Contractors.

- Safe Environment requirements for all members of the clergy are tracked and stored permanently in the Office for Clergy and Religious Personnel. Prior to the arrival of visiting clergy, check with the Office for Clergy and Religious Personnel to verify that all Safe Environment requirements are in place. A letter of suitability for ministry is required for all visiting members of the clergy.

Safe Environment documentation includes the following:

- A signed acknowledgement of the Code of Conduct Executive Summary which applies to each individual's assigned ministry as well as a sign off for the Safe Environment Handbook.
- Verification of attendance at VIRTUS and continuing education every five (5) or ten (10) years depending on the category of Personnel.
- Verification of an initial criminal background check and background check renewals every five (5) or ten (10) years based on the category of Personnel.

## **7.0 Conflicts of Interest**

7.1 Clerics and Men in Formation should avoid situations that might present a conflict of interest. The clergy member, Seminarian and Candidate for the Diaconate must establish and maintain clear, appropriate boundaries.

## **8.0 Reporting Ethical or Professional Misconduct**

Clerics have a duty to report their own ethical or professional misconduct and the misconduct of others.

8.1 Clerics must hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. When there is an indication of illegal actions by a clergy member, you should notify the proper civil authorities immediately and also notify the Vicar for Clergy.

8.2 When an uncertainty exists about whether a situation or course of conduct violates this Code of Conduct or other religious, moral, or ethical principles, consult with the Vicar for Clergy.

8.3 When it appears that a member of the clergy has violated this Code of Pastoral Conduct or other religious, moral, or ethical principles, immediately report the issue to the Vicar for Clergy.

## **9.0 Administration**

9.1 Pastors are responsible for the protection of the children and young people to whom they serve. Pastors must ensure that all lay employees and volunteers in the parish are in full compliance with the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and the Safe Environment Policies of the Diocese of Bridgeport. It is recommended that Pastors designate an Adult who will assist with ongoing tracking of all Safe Environment requirements. Pastors are ultimately responsible for ensuring every Adult who works or volunteers in the parish remains in full compliance with the Policies and Procedures contained within the Safe Environment Handbook.

9.2 Pastors or designated Personnel must carefully review and approve of all requests by volunteers and employees to use personal cell phones and social media accounts to communicate with parish youth which should be transparent to the greatest extent possible. Parents must approve of direct electronic communications with their child.

9.3 Pastors must make publicly available to parishioners, employees and volunteers the procedures for reporting suspected abuse of a minor.



## Appendix H

### **Grooming Behaviors and Warning Signs in Offenders of Child Sexual Abuse**

Grooming is a gradual process by which an Adult intentionally initiates contact with a minor in order to eventually sexually abuse them. Offenders go to great lengths to avoid detection. Most children and family members will know the abuser. Approximately 29% of all cases of child sexual abuse are committed by family. You can't identify an offender by their physical characteristics, age, occupation, race or gender. It is a person's behavior that sets them apart and enables caring Adults and children to spot early warning signs. It is critical to learn these signs and to report them as soon as possible. All Adults who work or volunteer in the Diocese of Bridgeport are taught to avoid certain behaviors which may appear as grooming behaviors when working with minors. Some of these most common grooming behaviors are listed below. It is important to note that only 11% of child sexual abuse is committed by a stranger. For more information visit [www.virtusonline.org](http://www.virtusonline.org) (BRIDGEPORT) to attend an upcoming VIRTUS workshop.

Offenders often exhibit one or more of the following signs:

- Always wants to be alone with children.
- Gives gifts without parent's permission. Expensive and frequent gifts may be a sign. Gifts might include meals, trips, electronics, video games or money. It is always a warning sign if a child is threatened if they tell.
- Excessive praise and attention of child.
- Takes pictures or videos without parent's knowledge or permission.
- Compliments the child's attractiveness.
- Believes the rules do not apply to them.
- Uses private one-on-one electronic communication with minors.
- Texts or phone calls may be frequent or during times when parents are not home or awake. The offender may give child the electronic device to use for this purpose.
- Allows or encourages children to break rules or break the law making them feel responsible and less likely to report abuse.
- Undermines parental authority or manipulates a situation by siding with the child over the parent.
- Uses inappropriate language in the presence of the child.
- Tells inappropriate jokes or talks about sex.
- Offers to give the child chores or jobs to earn money without parent's permission and with no other Adults around.
- Suggests games involving physical contact which appear accidental at first however, the intent is to groom the child for sexual contact.
- Gives illegal drugs, alcohol or shows pornography.
- Goes overboard touching, wrestling, horseplay, hugs, rubbing, pinching, tickling, patting, having the child sit on laps or gives piggy-back rides. The touch may appear accidental and in public at first and then the touching becomes sexual and private over time.

- More excited to be with children than with Adults.
- May spend time with peers or siblings of the victim who they do not abuse to gain trust.
- Offers to make a child famous or get them on T.V. or to introduce them to a famous person. They may ask the child to keep it a secret.
- Insists a child accept assistance like a ride home or makes them feel bad for refusing the help

If you suspect boundary violations or grooming behavior toward a minor or Vulnerable Adult, contact the police and The CT Department of Children and Family Services 1-800-842-2288 and the Office of Safe Environment (203) 650-3265.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORMS

<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Executive Summaries and Acknowledgement Forms</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
I.	Clergy and Men in Formation .....	68
II.	Religious Sisters and Brothers .....	69
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VI.	Independent Contractors, Tenants and Vendors .....	73

*Note: Some terms used in the Appendices and Executive Summaries are defined in the main sections of the Safe Environment Handbook*

**Executive Summary for Clergy and Men in Formation**

As a **Cleric** or **Man in Formation**, I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this Code of Conduct. Clerics and Men in Formation who are committed to a celibate lifestyle are called to be an example of celibate chastity in all relationships at all times. I promise to conduct myself transparently and professionally both in person and while using any form of technology.

**As a Clergy Member or Man in Formation, I will:**

- At all times avoid even the appearance of impropriety in person and while using technology.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with a minor or Vulnerable Adult at church activities.
- Be transparent and avoid the appearance of impropriety when giving and receiving gifts.
- Report any suspected abuse or risk of harm involving a minor or Vulnerable Adult outside of confession, including child pornography, to the Pastor, Administrator, or appropriate supervisor, the police, the D.C.F. Careline and to the Victim Assistance Coordinator of the Diocese of Bridgeport within twelve (12) hours of becoming aware of the information whether the abuse is alleged to have occurred recently or in the past.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation involving abuse of children, youth or in any investigation of Adult-to-Adult misconduct.
- Uphold the standards of the USCCB Charter and the Safe Environment Policies of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

**As a Clergy member or Man in Formation, I will not:**

- Be under the influence of alcohol at any time while ministering to minors.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Strike, spank, shove, shake, push, or slap others.
- Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade others.
- Touch a minor and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates minors.
- Use profanity in the presence of minors.
- Visit pornographic websites or participate in interactive websites for the purpose of initiating sexual contacts, live or virtual.

I have read the Safe Environment Handbook and I am aware of the sections of the Handbook which apply to my specific ministry, including but not limited to, The Code of Conduct for Clergy and Men in Formation; Guidelines for Trips, Events and Electronic Communication involving Minors and the sections on Mandatory Reporting. I agree to conduct myself accordingly.

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature/Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

***This page must be returned to the Office of Clergy and Religious Personnel.***

**Executive Summary for Religious Sisters and Brothers**

As a **Religious Sister or Brother**, I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in the Safe Environment Handbook when ministering to minors and Vulnerable Adults. Religious Sisters and Brothers who are committed to a celibate lifestyle are called to be an example of celibate chastity in all relationships at all times I promise to conduct myself transparently and professionally both in person and while using any form of technology.

**As a Religious Sister or Brother, I will:**

- At all times avoid even the appearance of impropriety in person and while using technology.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with a minor or Vulnerable Adult at church activities.
- Be transparent and avoid the appearance of impropriety when giving and receiving gifts.
- Report any suspected abuse or risk of harm involving a minor or Vulnerable Adult, including child pornography, to the Pastor, Administrator, or appropriate supervisor; the police, the D.C.F. Careline and to the Victim Assistance Coordinator of the Diocese of Bridgeport within twelve (12) hours of becoming aware of the information whether the abuse is alleged to have occurred recently or in the past.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation involving abuse of children, youth or in any investigation of Adult-to-Adult misconduct.
- Uphold the standards of the USCCB Charter and the Safe Environment Policies of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

**As a Religious Sister or Brother, I will not:**

- Be under the influence of alcohol at any time while ministering to minors.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Strike, spank, shove, shake, or slap others.
- Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade others.
- Touch a minor and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates minors.
- Use profanity in the presence of minors.
- Visit pornographic websites or participate in interactive websites for the purpose of initiating sexual contacts, live or virtual

I have read the Safe Environment Handbook and I am aware of the sections of the Handbook which may apply to my specific ministry, including but not limited to the Code of Conduct and the Guidelines for Trips, Events and Electronic Communication involving Minors. I agree to conduct myself accordingly.

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature/Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

***This page should be returned to your supervisor.  
Supervisors shall place this document in the Personnel file.***

**Executive Summary for Lay Employees**

As a **Lay Employee**, I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this Safe Environment Handbook when ministering to minors or Vulnerable Adults. I promise to conduct myself transparently and professionally both in person and while using any form of technology.

**As a Lay Employee, I will:**

- At all times avoid even the appearance of impropriety in person and while using technology.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with a minor or Vulnerable Adult at church or school activities.
- Be transparent and avoid the appearance of impropriety when giving and receiving gifts.
- Report any suspected abuse or risk of harm involving a minor or Vulnerable Adult, including child pornography, to the Pastor, Administrator, or appropriate supervisor, the police, the D.C.F. Careline and to the Victim Assistance Coordinator of the Diocese of Bridgeport within twelve (12) hours of becoming aware of the information whether the abuse is alleged to have occurred recently or in the past.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation involving abuse of children, youth or in any investigation of Adult-to-Adult misconduct.
- Uphold the standards of the USCCB Charter and the Safe Environment Policies of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

**As a Lay Employee, I will not:**

- Be under the influence of alcohol at any time while ministering to minors.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Strike, spank, shove, shake, push, or slap others.
- Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade others.
- Touch a child and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates minors.
- Use profanity in the presence of minors.

I have read the Safe Environment Handbook and I am aware of the sections of this handbook which may apply to my specific ministry, including but not limited to the Code of Conduct and the Guidelines for Trips, Events and Electronic Communication involving Minors. I agree to conduct myself accordingly.

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature/Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

***This page must be returned to your supervisor.***  
***Supervisors shall place this document in the Personnel file permanently.***

**Executive Summary for Teachers and Administrators**

As an **Educator or Administrator**, I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this Safe Environment handbook when ministering to minors and Vulnerable Adults. I promise to conduct myself transparently and professionally both in person and while using any form of technology.

**As an Educator or Administrator, I will:**

- At all times avoid even the appearance of impropriety in person and while using technology.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with a minor or Vulnerable Adult at school or church activities.
- Be transparent and avoid the appearance of impropriety when giving and receiving gifts.
- Treat everyone with respect, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity and consideration.
- Report any suspected abuse or risk of harm involving a minor or Vulnerable Adult, including child pornography, to the Pastor, Administrator, or appropriate supervisor, the police, the D.C.F. Careline and to the Victim Assistance Coordinator of the Diocese of Bridgeport within twelve (12) hours of becoming aware of the information whether the abuse is alleged to have occurred recently or in the past.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation involving abuse of children, youth or in any investigation of Adult-to-Adult misconduct.
- Uphold the standards of the USCCB Charter and the Safe Environment Policies of the Diocese of Bridgeport.
- Document and report all bullying involving peer to peer threats (in person or electronically) to the Police, the Victim Assistance Coordinator and School Superintendent.

**As an Educator or Administrator, I will not:**

- Be under the influence of alcohol at any time while ministering to minors.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Strike, spank, shove, shake, push, or slap others.
- Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade others.
- Touch a minor and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates minors.
- Use profanity in the presence of minors.

I have read the Safe Environment Handbook and I am aware of the sections of that handbook which may apply to my specific ministry, including but not limited to, the sections on Mandatory Reporting: The Code of Conduct and Guidelines for Trips, Events and Electronic Communication involving Minors. I agree to conduct myself accordingly.

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature/Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

***This page must be returned to the Office of the Superintendent and stored permanently in the Employee's Personnel File.***

**Executive Summary for Lay Volunteers**

As a **Lay Volunteer**, I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this Safe Environment handbook when ministering to minors and Vulnerable Adults. I promise to conduct myself transparently and professionally both in person and while using any form of technology.

**As a Lay Volunteer, I will:**

- At all times avoid even the appearance of impropriety in person and while using technology.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with a minor or Vulnerable Adult at church or school activities.
- Be transparent and avoid the appearance of impropriety when giving and receiving gifts.
- Report any suspected abuse or risk of harm involving a minor or Vulnerable Adult, including child pornography, to the Pastor, Administrator, or appropriate supervisor, the police, the D.C.F. Careline and to the Victim Assistance Coordinator of the Diocese of Bridgeport within twelve (12) hours of becoming aware of the information whether the abuse is alleged to have occurred recently or in the past.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation involving abuse of children, youth or in any investigation of Adult-to-Adult misconduct.
- Uphold the standards of the USCCB Charter and the Safe Environment Policies of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

**As a Lay Volunteer, I will not:**

- Be under the influence of alcohol at any time while ministering to minors.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Strike, spank, shove, shake, push, or slap others.
- Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade others.
- Touch a minor and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates minors.
- Use profanity in the presence of minors.

I have read the Safe Environment Handbook and I am aware of the sections of the handbook which may apply to my specific ministry, including but not limited to, The Code of Conduct and the Guidelines for Trips, Events and Electronic Communication involving Minors. I agree to conduct myself accordingly.

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature/Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

***This page must be returned to your supervisor.***  
***Supervisors shall ensure that this document is stored***  
***permanently onsite at the parish, school or diocesan program.***



**Executive Summary for Independent Contractors, Tenants and Vendors**

**NAME OF COMPANY:** \_\_\_\_\_ **OWNER:** \_\_\_\_\_

**STREET ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_ **CITY/STATE/ZIP:** \_\_\_\_\_

**EMAIL ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_ **PHONE NUMBER:** \_\_\_\_\_

As an Independent Contractor, Tenant or Vendor routinely on Diocesan Premises, I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this Code of Conduct as a condition of routine services I provide within The Diocese of Bridgeport.

**As an Independent Contractor, Tenant or Vendor, I will:**

- Clear a criminal background check through online VIRTUS registration.
- Ensure that every Adult I assign to work on Diocesan premises has successfully pre-registered in the VIRTUS database and cleared a criminal background check.
- Attend VIRTUS training that teaches Adults about the warning signs of child sexual abuse and how to prevent it.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with minors or Vulnerable Adults on church property.
- Report suspected abuse of a minor to the pastor, the Victim Assistance Coordinator, the police and D.C.F.
- Cooperate within the requirements of the law in any investigation of abuse.
- Conduct myself in accordance with the Safe Environment Policies of the Diocese of Bridgeport.
- Avoid making comments about the physical attractiveness of minors who are on the premises.

**As an Independent Contractor, Tenant or Vendor, I will not:**

- Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs at any time while working on Diocesan premises.
- Touch a minor and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner
- Use profanity in the presence of minors.
- Place any employee or volunteer of the company on Diocesan premises who has been convicted of a crime against children or a sex crime.

I understand that all employees or volunteers that I assign to work on Diocesan premises are required to successfully clear a criminal background check at my company's expense. I understand that depending on the specific nature of my work or position on Diocesan premises, I may also be required to attend a designated Safe Environment training and sign an Acknowledgement of Receipt for the Safe Environment Handbook.

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature/Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**This form must be signed and returned original to**

*Diocese of Bridgeport, Office of Safe Environment, 238 Jewett Ave. Bridgeport, CT 06606.*

***Please send a copy to the locations where you provide services in the Diocese.***