

# **Diocese of Stockton**

## **STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR THOSE WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The following Policy is applicable to all persons employed by or volunteering in any of the parishes and institutions in the Diocese of Stockton. So that it is clear who must be aware of the contents of this document, it includes, but is not limited to, priests, religious (men and women), deacons, pastoral coordinators, school/program administrators, teachers, catechists, youth ministers, support staff, custodial staff, coaches, school program volunteers, parish volunteers, seminarians serving internships, lay theology students, spiritual advisors, and those contracted to work for the diocese, parishes, schools and other diocesan institutions.

This Policy has been developed to help create a safe, appropriate, and Christian environment for minors and their relationship with adults involved in Church ministry and other activities and events. These child-specific standards are designed to serve as a supplement to the sexual boundary guidelines/code of ethics applicable to all those involved in the ministry of the Catholic Church (whether with minors or adults) that are set forth in the Diocese of Stockton's Code of Pastoral Conduct for Priests, Deacons, Religious, Seminarians, Lay Employees, Volunteers, and other contractors.

### **GUIDELINES WITH REGARD TO MINISTRY WITH MINORS**

1. Any and all involvement with minors (i.e., individuals under the age of 18) is to be approached from the premise that minors should always be viewed -- whether in a social or ministerial situation -- as restricted individuals; that is, they are not independent. Wherever they are and whatever they do is to be with the explicit knowledge and consent of their parents and guardians. They are subject to specific civil and criminal laws in the State of California, which may prohibit certain activities. They are not adults and are not permitted unfettered decisions.
2. Whenever possible (see Nos. 3, 4, 5 and 6 below) adults must avoid situations which will place them in a position to be alone with a minor in the rectory, school, or in a closed room.
3. In meeting and/or pastoral counseling situations involving a minor, excluding Sacrament of Reconciliation, the presence or proximity of another adult is encouraged. However, in those situations where the presence of another adult is not usual or practical (e.g., piano lessons, disciplinary meeting with an administrator, etc.), another adult should be informed that the meeting is taking place. The meeting place should be accessible and visible, with the door where the meeting is taking place left ajar, unless there is a clear window built into the door.
4. An unaccompanied minor is allowed only in the professional section of the rectory or parish center, not in the living quarters. Minors age 16 and over are

permitted to work in the rectory when there would normally be at least two adults present, i.e., over 21 years of age.

5. At least two adults should be present when a group of minors engage in organized events or sports activities.
6. Adults are to avoid being the only adult in a bathroom, shower room, locker room, or other dressing areas whenever minors are using such facilities.
7. Youth trips of any kind should have a sufficient number of adult chaperones to preclude the appearance of inappropriate personal involvement with students.
8. While on youth trips or program activities with minors, adult chaperones, as well as the minors, are not to use alcohol or controlled substances.
9. While on youth trips, clergy or lay leaders are never to stay alone overnight in the same motel/hotel room with a minor or minors, with the exception of a lay leader staying in the same room with his/her own child.
10. Sacristy doors should remain open whenever minors are present within the sacristy.
11. Comments of a sexual nature are not to be made to any minor except in response to specific classroom or otherwise legitimate questions from a minor.
12. Adults are prohibited from serving or supplying alcohol, tobacco products, controlled substances, or inappropriate reading materials to minors.
13. Audiovisual, Internet, music, and printed resources used in programs should be screened prior to use to ensure their appropriateness for the participants.

**If child pornography images are discovered on church, school, or agency property or in the possession of church personnel or others (as listed in the introductory paragraph) whether on a computer or in the form of a video, printed pictures, or some other form, it must be promptly reported to law enforcement and must be promptly reported to our Human Resources Office (209) 466-0636.**

**The discovery of child pornography in the hands of church personnel or others (as listed above) or on church property, including school sites, should be treated as promptly and carefully as child abuse is treated.**

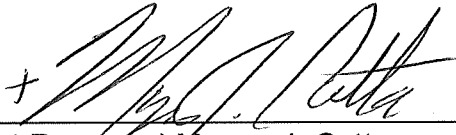
14. Careful boundaries concerning physical contact with minors must be observed at all times and should only occur under public circumstances. Prudent discretion and respect must be shown before touching another person in any way. An adult should not assume that a child is comfortable with an adult-initiated hug or embrace, and, in any event, special care should be taken to avoid incidental contact, unintended or otherwise, with or in the vicinity of a child's genital areas. If the child initiates physical contact, such as a hug, an appropriate limited response is proper.

15. Adults should refrain from giving regular and/or expensive gifts to children and young people without prior approval from the parents or guardian and the pastor or administrator.
16. Clear violations of these standards, as well as any sexual misconduct, must be reported immediately to the appropriate parish, diocesan and/or civil authorities in accordance with civil law and diocesan policy.

#### **GUIDELINES WITH REGARD TO PASTORAL COUNSELING**

1. Pastoral counseling must take place only in the professional portion of a rectory or parish facility, not in the living quarters.
2. Offices or classrooms used for pastoral counseling should have a window in the door, or the door is to be left ajar during the counseling session.
3. Another adult should be in close proximity during any counseling session.
4. Unless the subject matter precludes their presence and/or knowledge, parents or guardians of minors should be made aware of the counseling session.
5. A referral for professional assistance is encouraged if counseling is expected to extend beyond two or three sessions with a minor. Evaluation of the situation should be made with the parents or guardians.
6. The counselor should remain alert to recognize any personal/physical attraction to or from a client. In such a situation, the client should be referred to another qualified adult or licensed professional.

Approved: February 11, 2019  
Revised: January 20, 2021

  
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Most Reverend Myron J. Cotta  
Bishop of the Diocese of Stockton

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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT PAGE**

I hereby acknowledge that I have read the Standards of Conduct of the Diocese of Stockton and I am aware that there is a complete copy of the Code of Pastoral Conduct which I may access on the Diocesan website at [www.stocktondiocese.org](http://www.stocktondiocese.org). I agree to abide by this code and conduct myself in complete accordance with it. I understand that any violation of the Code of Pastoral Conduct as identified in this document will be subject to remedial action by the Church organization. Corrective action may take various forms depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm in accord with canon and civil law.

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

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and location of Parish, school, or agency:

\_\_\_\_\_

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

\* For a complete copy of the Code of Pastoral Conduct, refer to the Diocesan website.