



ARCHDIOCESE OF BOSTON

CODE OF MINISTERIAL BEHAVIOR

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CODE OF MINISTERIAL BEHAVIOR

On Ministerial Behavior

Priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, administrators, staff, employees and volunteers in our parishes, religious communities, institutes, and organizations must uphold Christian values and conduct. The following Code of Pastoral Conduct provides a set of standards for conduct in pastoral situations.

1. Responsibility

- The public and private conduct of clergy, staff, and volunteers can inspire and motivate people, but it can also scandalize and undermine people's faith. Clergy, staff, and volunteers must, at all times, be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work. They must also know that God's goodness and grace support them in their ministry.
- We have a responsibility to witness in all relationships the chastity appropriate to our state in life, whether celibate, married or single. We must avoid any covert or overt sexual behaviors with those for whom we have a professional or pastoral responsibility. This includes seductive speech or gestures as well as physical contact that sexually abuses, exploits or harasses another person. We are to provide safe environments in parishes, schools and institutions where children and others can be assured that their boundaries will not be violated.
- We should be aware of our own and other persons' vulnerability, especially when working alone with another, and be particularly aware that we bear the greater responsibility for maintaining sexual boundaries in a pastoral relationship, for we hold the greater power. We must not initiate sexual behavior, and must refuse it when another invites or consents to it. We must give preference to the perspective and judgment of those who are vulnerable and dependent on us in order to determine whether touching would be an appropriate expression of pastoral care.
- We must show prudent discretion before touching another person, since we cannot control how physical touch will be received. We strive for greater self-awareness in order to recognize the sexual dynamics at work for us in pastoral relationships and to heed the warning signs in our lives that indicate when we are approaching boundary violations. We assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all our relationships with others.
- We should satisfy our needs for affection, intimacy, attraction, and affirmation outside the pastoral relationship. We should seek supervision, spiritual direction or other professional help to remain focused on our professional responsibilities and to hold firm to the sexual boundaries of the pastoral relationship.
- We must intervene when there is evidence of or have reasonable cause to suspect that children are being abused in any way.

