

**DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO**  
**CODE OF ETHICAL STANDARDS**  
**FOR MINISTRY TO MINORS**

**PREFACE**

The diocese is pleased to present this *Code of Ethical Standards for Ministry to Minors in the Diocese of Kalamazoo* to all Church leaders in the diocese. The diocese is providing this Code of Ethical Standards to all those who serve as leaders and ministers in the Church: priests, religious men and women, deacons, lay employees, and volunteers who work with minors. As leaders in a Church that sets high moral standards for its members, we have the responsibility to lead by example.

The priests and other Church leaders in our diocese strive to be professional, compassionate, holy, effective ministers. The diocese is continually impressed by their talent and generosity. This Code of Ethical Standards will support all of you in ministry as you continue to strive toward excellence. By following its protocol, you will know that you are doing what is right in your interaction with minors. It is the responsibility of appropriate supervisors to see to it that these standards of ministry governing the interaction of adults and minors be implemented at the parish and school level.

The purposes for publishing this Code of Ethical Standards for our diocese are important: to protect our Church leaders and ministers from the slightest suggestion of inappropriate behavior and to witness to the commitment our local Church has to ensure the safety of the minors entrusted to it. As leaders in the Church, we all want to follow the mandates of the Gospel, the norms of church and civil law, and always strive to do what is ethically right in the eyes of our contemporary society. It is hoped that this Code of Ethical Standards will help us to do just that.

October, 2003

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**PREAMBLE**

As leaders in the Church founded by Christ, priests, deacons, and lay ministers within our parishes and institutions must always seek to uphold Christian values and conduct. In addition to following the Gospel and its mandates, they will want to act properly at all times in the light of contemporary society and its needs. This Code of Ethical Standards does not presume to provide the answer to all the ethical questions facing Church leaders. What it does establish is a set of general ethical standards and boundaries when ministering to minors.

The following Code of Ethical Standards is applicable to all persons employed by or volunteering in any of the parishes and institutions of the Diocese of Kalamazoo. This Code of Ethical Standards has been developed to help create a safe, appropriate, and Christian environment for minors and their relationships with adults involved in Church ministry.

**BACKGROUND**

This Code of Ethical Standards is to be considered a working document that will be revised as needed under the direction of the Bishop of Kalamazoo. The Bishop acknowledges, with gratitude, the advice and counsel of the Presbyteral Council and diocesan offices in the development of these standards.

Responsibility for adherence to this Code of Ethical Standards rests with the Church leaders themselves. It is anticipated however, that disregard of this code by Church leaders will be dealt with by the appropriate employing/appointing organization (e.g. the parish, the religious order, the diocesan bishop). Remedial action may take various forms from counseling to removal from ministry.

The conduct of Church leaders, both public and private, has the potential to inspire and motivate people, or to scandalize and undermine their faith. They must be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their ministry. They must also know that God's goodness and graces support them in their ministry.

## **ETHICAL STANDARDS**

### **WITH REGARD TO THE MINISTRY TO MINORS**

*Church leaders working with minors shall use appropriate judgment to insure an open and trustworthy relationship.*

1.1 Minors shall always be viewed - whether in a social or ministerial situation - as the restricted individuals they are, that is, they are not independent. Wherever they are and whatever they do shall be with the explicit knowledge of the parents or guardians. Also, they are subject to specific civil laws in their own proper state and city which may prohibit certain activities. They are not adults and are not permitted unfettered decisions. Any and all involvement shall be approached from this premise.

1.2 Caution and professional attitudes are to be observed in all interactions with minors.

1.3 An adult shall never be alone with a minor in the rectory, parish residence, school, car, or ordinarily in a closed room.

1.4 In meeting and or pastoral counseling situations involving a minor, excluding Sacramental 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 shall be informed that the meeting will be taking place or the doorway shall be left open.

1.5 A minor shall be allowed only in the professional section of a rectory or parish residence, not in the living quarters.

1.6 Minors shall be permitted to work in the rectory, parish residence, school or parish facility, only when there are at least two (2) adults present in the building.

1.7 An adult shall not engage in games or other sport activities with one minor unless a second adult is present.

1.8 A group of minors shall engage in organized games or sports activities when there are at least two (2) adults present.

1.9 An adult shall never be the only adult in a bathroom, shower room, locker room or other dressing areas whenever minors are using such facilities.

1.10 Youth group trips shall have a minimum of two (2) adult chaperones. Larger groups shall have at least one (1) adult chaperone for every ten (10) minors.

1.11 While on youth trips, the adults shall maintain a professional stature and socialize appropriately with minors.

1.12 One (1) adult shall never engage in an overnight trip with a minor or minors.

1.13 While on youth group trips, an adult shall never stay alone overnight in the same motel/hotel room with a minor

or minors.

1.14 Adults shall take care to avoid the risk of a minor's developing a dependency on them in the place of the minor's parent or guardian, becoming a father and/or mother figure to a minor.

1.15 The sacristy door shall always be open whenever minors are present within the sacristy.

1.16 Comments of a sexual nature shall generally not be made to any minor except in response to specific classroom or otherwise legitimate questions from a minor. The possession or viewing of pornographic materials is prohibited.

1.17 Topics or vocabulary such as profanity, cursing, and vulgar humor which could not comfortably be used in the presence of parents/guardians or another adult, shall not be used in the presence of a minor/minors.

1.18 Adults are absolutely prohibited from serving or supplying alcohol or controlled substances to minors. Nor shall alcoholic beverages be served or consumed by adults at parish or school social activities organized for minors.

1.19 Reflection on the words of Jesus Christ regarding minors is a healthy meditation before any involvement with a minor/minors, and a salutary reflection and examination after each involvement. (Mt. 18:6, Mk. 9:42, Lk. 17:2, Mk. 10:13-16)

## **ETHICAL STANDARDS**

### **WITH REGARD TO THE**

### **PASTORAL COUNSELING OF MINORS**

*Church leaders who conduct pastoral counseling for families, individuals, or groups, must respect their rights and advance the welfare of each person.*

2.1 Pastoral counseling of a minor must take place only in the professional portion of a rectory or parish residence, never in the living quarters.

2.2 The Sacrament of Reconciliation shall be celebrated in a place so designated for that purpose: a reconciliation chapel or confessional. Only extreme inconvenience or impossibility would be an acceptable excuse to deviate from this standard.

2.3 Office or classroom doors shall have a window, or be left open during pastoral counseling.

2.4 If possible, another adult shall be in close proximity during any counseling session.

2.5 Unless the subject matter precludes their presence or knowledge, parents or guardians of minors shall be made aware of the counseling session.

2.6 The relationship between an adult and minor must always remain professional during the counseling session.

2.7 An adult shall try to recognize any personal/physical attraction to or from a minor. In such a situation, the minor shall be referred immediately to another qualified adult or licensed professional.

2.8 If counseling is expected to extend beyond two (2) sessions, evaluation of the situation shall be made with the parents or guardians, an advisor, or licensed professional.

2.9 Public, appropriate, and non-sexual boundaries concerning physical contact with a minor must be observed at all times.

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By means of this general decree, I hereby establish the above code as particular law within the ecclesiastical region of the Diocese of Kalamazoo and as binding upon the faithful of the same Diocese of Kalamazoo, according to the norms of the Code of Canon Law (1983).

Date: October 16, 2003

The Most Reverend James A. Murray  
Bishop of Kalamazoo

T. Edward Carey, Jr.  
Chancellor