

## **Appendix 19: Diocesan Whistleblower Policy**

### **Introduction**

The Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, hereafter referred to as the organization, incorporates the Pastoral Center offices and other Diocesan centers; every Catholic Parish, Mission, School, Foundation, Charitable Corporation and cemetery within its geographical boundaries; and all the affiliated sub-groups associated with each individual entity such as: women's and men's guilds, youth groups & clubs, etc. Reference to the "organization" means all of the entities either included above or implied by direct association.

### **Policy Statement**

All officials, council members, Pastors, Parochial Vicars, Deacons, principals, administrators, lay employees and volunteers associated with the organization (known as *responsible individuals*) are to hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. When it appears that any responsible individual within the organization is reasonably perceived to be involved with (a) improper accounting for funds and/or materials owned and managed by the organization, (b) violations of the Code of Business Conduct (Financial), Code of Conduct for Church Personnel & Volunteers (Personal Behavior), Conflict of Interest Policy and the Fraud Policy of the organization, and (c) other questionable financial matters it is to be reported to the organization's management and the Pastoral Center. The reportable misconduct may include, but is not limited to violation of: federal, state or local laws, rules and/or regulations; gross mismanagement; waste; fraud; embezzlement; neglect of duty; violations of the diocesan sexual misconduct policy; violations of diocesan personnel policies; and actions that threaten or are viewed as harmful to the health, safety and welfare of others.

Reportable misconduct also includes harassment which is unwelcome conduct toward an individual whether an employee or volunteer when it creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment that:

- Causes work performance to suffer; or
- Negatively affects job opportunities.

Any allegations that are made maliciously or with the foreknowledge that the allegation is false will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

No responsible individual within the Diocese and specifically at a parish or school is to retaliate in any manner against another who makes a report in good faith. If retaliation does take place, the retaliator will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

All misconduct will first be reported to the Pastor/Principal/Administrator who is obligated to inform the appropriate official at the Diocesan Pastoral Center. If the person making the report cannot make the report to the pastor/principal/administrator due to their potential involvement, the report must be made directly to the appropriate official at the Diocesan Pastoral Center. All information will be dealt with in a confidential manner without exception. The decision to proceed with an investigation will be made jointly by the pastor/principal, the Pastoral Center officials and consultants to discern appropriate actions to pursue in light of canonical, civil and criminal statutes, the nature of the allegation and other significant circumstances.

An official notice from the Diocese that the reported misconduct has been dealt with and resolved will be sent to the reporting individual(s) or appropriate council(s) of the organization with anonymity maintained to the maximum extent possible.

## Summary of Revisions effective August 2014

- Changed wording to conform to generic definitions from introduction and made minor language improvements;
- Added language dealing with harassment to the reportable misconduct section;
- Revised the final paragraph dealing with notifications back to the complainant(s) assuring them the issue has been dealt with while maintaining confidentiality and the details of the resolution.