



## THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

### *POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH*

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In June of 2025, the newly revised *Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth* was promulgated as law for the Diocese of Kalamazoo and is now being rolled out. This policy is encouraged to be implemented as soon as possible, and its mandatory implementation is effective January 1, 2026. All previous editions of the policy are hereby abrogated.

The policy establishes the standards, safeguards, and procedures for protecting children and youth across the diocese and all parishes, schools, and related Catholic ministries. It provides a cohesive collection of definitions for use with the policy, outlines prevention requirements and mandatory reporting procedures, and affirms the diocese's commitment to pastoral care for all those impacted by child abuse.

After a thorough reading of the policy, all clergy, all employees of the diocese, parishes, schools and Catholic Charities, and all volunteers working with children and youth are to complete and sign the appropriate form found in the Appendix, namely, the "Adult Code of Conduct and Statement of Intent for Compliance" and the "Code of Conduct and Statement of Intent for Compliance for Ages 13-17." These forms are also available for download on the diocesan website: [diozkoo.org/protect](https://diozkoo.org/protect).

The following are summary points from each section:

#### **Definitions**

Key terms are defined for use within the policy – these terms include: *Adult, Child/Minor, Child Abuse, Child Pornography, Clear and Convincing Evidence, Direct Contact, Immediate Vicinity, Personnel categories (employees, volunteers, contractors), Pornography, Routine Interaction, Sexual Abuse, Substantiated Case of Child Abuse, Vulnerable Adult.*

#### **Prevention of Child Abuse**

Mandatory screening procedures are outlined for clergy, non-school personnel and school personnel, and volunteers.

All individuals within these categories continue to undergo state & national background checks (initial and periodic) and to complete abuse-prevention training as directed by the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth.

#### **Two new procedures within the screening process include:**

- 1) the requirement of a signed "Adult Code of Conduct and Statement of Intent for Compliance" or as applicable the "Code of Conduct and Statement of Intent for Compliance for Ages 13 through 17"
- 2) Clearance from the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth.

Clergy, seminarians, or diaconate candidates not in compliance with all the requirements will not be permitted to minister in any capacity.

Employees of Parish, Schools, or Catholic Charities must complete all screening requirements *before being hired and working in any capacity.*

Volunteers working with children must complete all screening requirements *before volunteering in any capacity.*

Certain criminal convictions and substantiated abuse cases may permanently disqualify individuals from working with children or youth in the Diocese of Kalamazoo.

### **Working with Children/Youth**

This section covers matters related to classrooms, on-site and off-site events, activities and youth gatherings conducted by the diocese, parish, school, or Catholic-related agency. Key points outlined include (but are not limited to):

Required adult-to-child ratios for classrooms, events, trips, and youth gatherings.

A minimum of two cleared adults for all activities (husband/wife pair count as one adult, not two).

Strict rules for overnight trips, transportation, and private home gatherings.

Childcare programs must be pre-approved and parent-consent-based.

Adults are prohibited from strictly one-on-one private communication with minors (including via text/email/social media).

### **Counseling and Spiritual Direction of Children/Youth**

Counseling and Spiritual direction should be done in an appropriate setting and at an appropriate time. Specific precautions are outlined including but not limited to:

- The door to the meeting room must be left open or allow for visibility from the outside (e.g., window).
- Barring emergencies, another adult must be informed of the meeting and be nearby.
- Barring emergencies, meetings must occur during standard business, worship, or school hours.

### **Reporting Child Abuse**

This section discusses being a mandatory reporter as well as what incidents should be reported. The diocese extends the mandate to report even more broadly than required by the secular law.

## **Procedure for Reporting Child Abuse**

First and foremost, if a child is in danger, then local police should be contacted immediately by calling 911.

A mandated reporter shall not conduct an investigation on his or her own.

As appropriate, the diocese will follow its internal investigation protocols and coordinate with law enforcement. The diocese will only commence its investigation after receiving clearance from law enforcement authorities.

## **Allegations and Response Procedures**

When an allegation of child abuse has been received and after verifying that all appropriate reporting has been made, procedures for the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth are to be followed as outlined in the following areas: investigation, cooperation, care of victims, penalties, maintaining records.

## **Confidentiality**

In an attempt to balance transparency with the need to protect victims and their identities, allegations will be treated with appropriate confidentiality, with information from reports generally restricted to proper authorities unless public safety requires some disclosure of information.

The diocese will continue constructing and periodically updating its centralized, digitized abuse records and its public list of those disqualified from working with children or youth within the diocese.

## **Pastoral Care**

The diocese commits to supporting victims, families, the accused, and parish communities through healing and professional assistance.

## **RESOURCES & CONTACT INFORMATION**

Office for the Protection of Children and Youth, 269-349-8714

Very Reverend Fabio Garzon, Director/Vicar General; [fgarzon@diokzoo.org](mailto:fgarzon@diokzoo.org)

Marina Hentz, Associate Director/Safe Environment Coordinator; [mhentz@diokzoo.org](mailto:mhentz@diokzoo.org)

Michigan Department of Health and Human Resources: 855-444-3911

[Diokzoo.org/protect](https://diokzoo.org/protect)