

# Diocese of Springfield

## **CODE OF CONDUCT OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD**

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Springfield (the “Bishop”) places the highest value on the integrity and high moral standards of those associated with the work of the Church. With these principles in mind, the Bishop, in both his canonical role and on behalf of Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield, formerly the Roman Catholic Bishop of Springfield, a Corporation Sole (“the Diocese of Springfield”), hereby promulgates this Code of Conduct (the “Code” or “Code of Conduct”).

This Code of Conduct shall apply to all employees and volunteers of the Diocese of Springfield and all clergy incardinated in the Diocese of Springfield and those clergy who have received faculties to minister within the Diocese (together, referred to herein as “Diocesan Personnel”). This Code shall apply to all central ministries, parishes, shrines, chapels, and parish schools.

This Code shall not apply to separately incorporated organizations, including, but not limited to, independent Catholic Charities, independent Catholic Schools, or other Catholic organizations. However, those organizations are encouraged to adopt a Code of Conduct based upon this model.

Responsibility for adherence to the Code rests with each individual. It is required that all Diocesan Personnel shall have read the Code carefully and understand what is expected of them in their employment/ministry with the Diocese of Springfield. This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with all other policies and procedures of the Diocese of Springfield, including but not limited to the Diocese’s Sexual Harassment Policy, the Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth, the Diocese’s policy on Conflict of Interest and Employee Handbook.

### ***Principles of Ethics and Integrity***

As representatives of the Church and of the Bishop, all Diocesan Personnel must act responsibly and in a manner that will reflect favorably on the Church and the Diocese. Accordingly:

1. Diocesan Personnel will, in the exercise of their responsibilities for the Diocese, conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the teachings of The Roman Catholic Church as enunciated by the Holy Father and the Bishops in communion with him; more specifically, Diocesan Personnel shall, in all such matters, accept, rely upon and defer to the teaching authority of the Bishop in all matters of faith and morals.
2. Diocesan Personnel will exhibit the highest ethical standards and personal integrity.
3. Diocesan Personnel will continually and objectively examine and evaluate their own actions and intentions to ensure that their behavior promotes the welfare and reputation of the Diocese.
4. Diocesan Personnel will follow applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations, including, without limitation, mandated reporting requirements to the extent legally applicable.

5. Diocesan Personnel will establish clear, appropriate boundaries with anyone with whom they have a ministerial, business or professional relationship.
6. Diocesan Personnel will be responsible stewards of the resources, human and financial, of the Diocese, observing both canon and civil law, and making decisions concerning the disposition of resources that reflect Catholic social and moral teaching. Diocesan Personnel must not, for any reason, exploit the trust placed in them by the faith community.
7. Diocesan Personnel who are properly authorized to provide pastoral counseling or spiritual direction must recognize the special relationship that will necessarily evolve with such individuals seeking these pastoral services.
8. Diocesan Personnel must not develop inappropriate relationships with any individual, must always conduct themselves in a professionally supportive manner at all times, must be appropriately discrete, and must never exploit an individual for sexual or other inappropriate purposes.
9. Diocesan Personnel must respect the rights and protect the welfare of each individual, while at the same time recognizing their legal obligations to share information with others when required.
10. Diocesan Personnel must never purport to act beyond their level of competency in counseling situations and shall refer individuals to other professionals when appropriate.
11. Diocesan Personnel shall not enter a counseling relationship with someone with whom they have a pre-existing personal relationship (e.g., employee, professional colleague, friend, or other pre-existing relationship). This does not preclude ministers providing services to members of their congregations or institutions. However, the nature of the relationship must be given careful consideration before entering into a counseling relationship, particularly given the disparity of power that occurs in ministerial relationships. Diocesan Personnel shall avoid counseling relationships with people whom they have a close or professional relationship (i.e., employee, professional colleague) and they shall also decline to provide counseling services to family members, friends, and other close personal relationships, unless the person has first been provided and declined an alternative counseling option, such as another counselor. This section shall not apply to sacramental confession.
12. Diocesan Personnel are fully and completely responsible for establishing and maintaining clear and appropriate boundaries in all counseling, counseling-related, and ministerial relationships. The responsibility for upholding proper boundaries must always reside on behalf of the person providing the counsel. Attempts by the client to initiate an inappropriate relationship with the counselor will not mitigate this responsibility for maintaining an appropriate, professional relationship. If, at any point,

- the Diocesan Personnel determine that a conflict exists, it is the responsibility of the Diocesan Personnel to refer the individual to another appropriate individual for counseling.
13. Diocesan Personnel must never engage in sexual intimacies with any individual seeking such pastoral services, including consensual and nonconsensual contact, forced physical contact, and inappropriate sexual comments, nor should they ever engage in sexual intimacies with individuals who are close to the individual, such as relatives or friends of the individual.
  14. Diocesan Personnel must never permit, cause, encourage or assist in the depiction of or posing for viewing by any person, either in person or by way of graphic means including digital or photographic image of the partially or fully unclothed body of a child, displaying intimate parts, in motion or not in motion, alone or with other persons, or the depiction of a child in apparent observation of sex acts by others in the child's presence.
  15. Diocesan Personnel must never display or distribute to a child any picture, photograph, book, pamphlet, digital image, movie or magazine the cover or content of which is principally made up of descriptions or depictions of sexual acts or contact, or which consists of pictures of nude or partially nude figures posed or presented in a manner which the average person applying contemporary community standards would find, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest.
  16. While respecting applicable confidentiality, sessions should be conducted in visible and accessible settings (with other persons in the building whenever feasible). Sessions should not be held at places or times that would tend to cause confusion about the nature of the relationship with the individual. This section, and paragraphs 17 and 19, shall not apply to sacramental confession.
  17. Whenever good judgement under the circumstances dictate, Diocesan Personnel should maintain a record of the times and places of sessions with each individual. Sessions shall be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times.
  18. No sessions may be conducted in private living quarters.
  19. Diocesan Personnel shall always promote an atmosphere and attitude of openness and transparency when meeting with clients.
  20. Diocesan Personnel must avoid inappropriate communications with any individuals on social media or other means of electronic or video technology. All Diocesan Personnel must be familiar with and follow the Diocesan Policy on Social Media Guidelines.
  21. Diocesan Personnel must not engage in or encourage physical, psychological, written, social media-based or verbal harassment of individuals with whom they interact and should seek to provide and preserve a professional work environment that is free from intimidation and harassment. All Diocesan Personnel must be familiar with and follow

the Diocesan Policy on Sexual Harassment.

22. Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, written, social media-based, or verbal behavior, including, but not limited to: physical or mental abuse, racial insults, derogatory ethnic slurs, persecution based on religious beliefs and practices, disparaging remarks and treatment because of a disability, bullying or ridicule of any kind, threats of eternal damnation or withholding sacraments, threats to disclose an individual's sexual orientation, unwelcome sexual advances or touching, sexual comments or sexual jokes, requests for sexual favors used as a condition of employment, or to affect other personnel decisions, such as promotion or compensation, and the display of offensive materials.
23. Harassment can be a single severe incident or a persistent pattern of behavior where the purpose or the effect is to create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating work environment.
24. Diocesan Personnel working with children and youth under age 18 and any individual over the age of 18 who habitually lacks the use of reason ("Protected Individuals") must maintain an open and trustworthy relationship with them and their parents, guardians or other adults responsible for their welfare, must be aware of their own and others' vulnerability when working alone with them and should consider a collaborative approach when working with them.
25. Physical contact with Protected Individuals can be misunderstood and should occur only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate under the circumstances, and never in private. One-on-one meetings with any Protected Individual are best held in a visible and accessible location, or if that is not feasible, then another Diocesan Personnel should be notified about the meeting. While maintaining the confidentiality of sacramental confession as necessary, it is always a safe practice to have two adults in the area where Protected Individuals are present.
26. Diocesan Personnel should always refrain from a) the possession and/or use of drugs, unless medically necessary, and/or alcohol when working with a Protected Individual, and b) the use of alcohol when working with Protected Individuals. Adults should also ensure that drugs and/or alcohol are not visible, when working with a Protected Person, to such person and should never purchase or otherwise provide access to alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, or any inappropriate videos or reading material (such as pornography) to Protected Individuals.
27. Other than under emergency circumstances or in the case of adult relatives, Diocesan Personnel should not provide shared, private, or overnight accommodation for anyone, including, but not limited to, accommodations in any Church-owned facility, private residence, hotel room or any other place where there is no other adult supervision, if applicable.

### *Violations/Reporting*

Violations of this Code of Conduct must be taken seriously and must be reported to the appropriate civil and ecclesial authorities according to the policies and procedures of the Diocese of Springfield, unless such disclosure is made during the Sacrament of Confession. There shall be no retaliation for any such reporting. Diocesan Personnel should review and know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and should always follow those mandates. Violations reported to the Diocese of Springfield shall be responded to in the appropriate manner and according to established policies.

1. Diocesan Personnel have a responsibility to monitor their behavior and that of other staff and volunteers, and a duty to report ethical or professional misconduct, inappropriate or harmful behavior, potentially risky situations, and potential boundary violations by anyone.
2. Diocesan Personnel must hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. When there is an indication of illegal actions by another Diocesan Personnel, any Diocesan Personnel on notice shall notify the proper civil authorities immediately, along with the Office of Safe Environment and Victim Assistance, pastor, principal, or agency director.
3. When an uncertainty exists about whether a situation or course of conduct violates this Code of Conduct or other religious, moral or ethical principles, consult with:
  - 3.1 The supervisor of the agency of the person with concerning behavior,
  - 3.2 The supervisor of the person observing the questionable behavior, or
  - 3.3 The Office of Safe Environment and Victim Assistance.
4. When it appears that a member of Diocesan Personnel has violated this Code of Conduct or other religious, moral, or ethical principles:
  - 4.1 Diocesan Personnel shall communicate, as soon as possible, the issue to a supervisor or next higher authority,
  - 4.2 The supervisor or higher authority shall immediately refer the matter directly to the Office of Safe Environment and Victim Assistance.
  - 4.3 The obligation of Diocesan Personnel to report client misconduct is subject to the duty of confidentiality. However, any agreement or duty to maintain confidentiality must yield to the need to report misconduct that threatens the safety, health, or well-being of any of the persons involved, except as provided for in Section 1 regarding Confidentiality. When in doubt,

Diocesan Personnel shall consult with the Office of Safe Environment and Victim Assistance using pseudonyms to protect confidentiality and determine if an issue should be reported.

4.4 Should an individual make a disclosure of inappropriate conduct, Diocesan Personnel shall not conduct independent investigations. However, in certain circumstances a few clarifying questions may be asked to determine whether a report is necessary, and to adequately report a suspicion or allegation to the authorities in consultation with an immediate supervisor.

4.4.1 The name of the parties involved is a relevant piece of information for reporting.

4.4.2 Basic information to clarify the nature of the interaction to assure that the report is necessary (i.e. to understand what a youth means by using certain words with several interpretations).

### *Confidentiality*

1. The following obligations regarding confidentiality are independent of, and subject at all times to, the confidentiality of the Sacrament of Confession as defined by Canon Law. Under no circumstances whatsoever can there be any disclosure of information received solely through the Sacrament of Confession as defined by Canon Law.
2. Information obtained during pastoral counselling or spiritual direction, whether formal or informal, should be confidential, except for compelling professional reasons or as required by law, including but not limited to mandated reporting. In all cases, however, sound pastoral judgment and discretion should be exercised. If there is clear and imminent danger to the individual being counselled or to others, Diocesan Personnel may disclose only the information necessary to protect the parties affected and to prevent harm. Before disclosure is made, if feasible, Diocesan Personnel should inform the person being counseled about the disclosure and the potential consequences.
3. While counseling a Protected Individual, if Diocesan Personnel discover a reasonable cause to believe that there is a serious threat to the Protected Individual's health or welfare, including sexual abuse or neglect, or a disclosure is made indicating that the Protected Individual is being abused in any way, such Diocesan Personnel should contact the appropriate civil and ecclesial authorities and make a report consistent with this Code of Conduct.
4. Information disclosed to Diocesan Personnel during the course of any session shall be held in the strictest confidence possible. NOTE: The following guidelines and obligations are independent of the confidentiality of the confessional. Under no circumstances can there be any disclosure—even indirect disclosure—by priests of

information received through the Sacrament of Reconciliation or any communication protected under Internal Forum and the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

5. Diocesan Personnel shall discuss the nature of confidentiality and its limitations with each person in counseling. This includes telling the client from the beginning the circumstances under which confidentiality is not maintained. (i.e., risk of imminent danger to the client or others, reporting abuse as mandated by law, etc.).
6. Diocesan Personnel shall keep minimal records of the content of sessions.
7. Knowledge that arises from professional contact may be used in teaching, writing, homilies, or other public presentations only when effective measures are taken to absolutely safeguard both the individual's identity and the confidentiality of the disclosures.
8. **DUTY TO WARN:** If Diocesan Personnel providing counseling discovers that there is a) a serious threat of imminent harm to a specific person or b) a serious threat to the welfare of a minor client and that communication of confidential information to a parent, legal guardian, person at risk, or law enforcement is essential to the health and well-being of all parties, the Diocesan Personnel shall:

8.1 Attempt to secure written consent from the client for the specific disclosure and inform the client that disclosure will occur despite their refusal.

8.2 If consent is not given, disclose only the information necessary to protect the health and well-being of the client and/or any other person at risk of harm.

8.3 Before disclosure, consultation with the appropriate supervisory personnel and/or the Vicar General is required. Such consultation shall occur as soon as possible, but not more than 24 hours after the client informs the Diocesan Personnel.

8.4 Notify the Office of Safe Environment and Victim Assistance as soon as possible, but no more than 24 hours after the client informs the Diocesan Personnel.

### ***Diocesan Personnel Well-being***

Diocesan Personnel have the duty to be responsible for their own spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional health. They should be aware of warning signs that indicate potential problems with their own spiritual, physical, mental, and/or emotional health, and seek help immediately whenever they notice behavioral or emotional warning signs in their own professional and/or personal lives.

### *Conflict of Interest*

1. Diocesan Personnel shall avoid situations that might present a conflict of interest. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call integrity and professional conduct into question.
2. The Diocese of Springfield shall provide all clergy, staff, and volunteers with a written “Conflict of Interest” policy that defines the agency’s expectations including the relevant factors that could result in an actual or perceived conflict of interest.
3. Diocesan Personnel shall disclose all relevant factors that potentially could create an actual or perceived conflict of interest.
4. Diocesan Personnel shall inform all parties when a real or potential conflict of interest arises. Resolution of the issues must protect the person receiving ministry services.
5. Diocesan Personnel shall not take advantage of anyone to whom they are providing services in order to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.
6. Diocesan Personnel shall not provide counseling services to anyone with whom they have a business, professional, or social relationship. When this is unavoidable, the client must be protected. The counselor must establish and maintain clear, appropriate boundaries.
7. Diocesan Personnel shall report to the Bishop or his designee any gifts, including the payment for goods or services to a third party and/or received by an individual, including clergy, that is in excess of the aggregate amount of \$500 per calendar year. Diocesan Personnel are not required to report aggregate gifts over \$500 per calendar year from an immediate family member.
8. When pastoral counseling or spiritual direction services are provided to two or more people who have a relationship with each other, the Diocesan Personnel must:
  - 8.1 Clarify with all parties the nature of each relationship,
  - 8.2 Anticipate any conflict of interest,
  - 8.3 Take appropriate actions to eliminate the conflict,
  - 8.4 Obtain from all parties written consent to continue services; and
  - 8.5 Provide documentation of these conversations to the program or agency supervisor.
9. Conflicts of interest may also arise when Diocesan Personnel’s independent

judgment is impaired by (a) prior dealings, (b) becoming personally involved, (c) becoming an advocate for one (person) against another or (d) having a financial interest in the outcome. In these circumstances, the Diocesan Personnel shall advise the parties that he or she can no longer provide services and refer them to another Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director or to the agency's supervisor for reassignment.

### *Interactions with Children and Youth*

Our children are the most important gifts God has entrusted to us. As an adult working with minors, I pledge to follow the rules and guidelines in this Code as a condition of my providing services to the minors of our Parishes, Schools and Diocese:

In my ministry interactions with minors (face-to-face and via technology) I SHALL:

- Treat everyone with respect, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Conduct myself in a manner that is consistent with the discipline, norms, and teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Provide a professional work environment that is free from harassment.
- Avoid situations that do not allow for public visibility and accessibility (i.e., avoid the development of outside private relationships with minors and the initiation of private communications with minors outside of approved ministry activities).
- Safeguard my use of technology so as to avoid private/isolated communications with minors, the sharing of personal information regarding minors, and the public identification of minors that does not conform to the technology policies and procedures of my parish, school, or agency where I am in ministry with minors.
- Follow all guidelines for communications with minors set forth by the parish, school, or diocesan agency for which I am working or volunteering.
- Follow Diocesan requirements about photographing and/or publishing images of youth involved in parish, school, and ministry.
- Refrain from giving significant gifts or granting special privileges or opportunities to specific minors.
- Report suspected child abuse in accordance with Massachusetts state laws and the Process for Reporting the Alleged Abuse of a Minor of the Diocese of Springfield.
- Cooperate, to the extent allowed by the law, in any investigation of abuse of minors.
- In my ministry interactions with minors (face-to-face and via technology) I SHALL NOT:

- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of minors.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or cannabis at any time while working with minors.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs, or misuse intoxicants or controlled substances, while in contact with minors.
- Strike, spank, shake, or slap minors.
- Humiliate, ridicule, or threaten minors.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates a minor or a group of minors.
- Make any type of statement that degrades or puts down any other adult, minor, or group of people. This includes, but is not limited to any type of racial or sexual joke or slur or degrading comment about any race, person, or group of people.
- Touch a minor in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Plan or conduct any type of youth-oriented event other than those that are approved, planned, and conducted by my church, school, or ministry team.
- Share with a minor anything about my own sexual history or any other experience that crosses the boundary between “public” and “private.”
- Take improper advantage of a counseling and/or authoritative relationship for my own benefit.
- Manufacture, possess, or distribute any type of pornography.
- View materials containing inappropriate content with and/or in the presence of minors.
- Contribute to the delinquency of a minor or group of minors in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
- Enter into any type of private communication with a minor that is not within the scope of my ministry, or any communication that would undermine the parent-child relationship, or serve to foster an inappropriate relationship with a minor.

***Appropriate Physical Contact While Working with Minors***

I understand that the following forms of physical contact are appropriate when working with minors:

- Handshakes, “fist-bump” greetings and “high fives.”
- Brief hugs and “side hugs” (when initiated by a minor).
- Hand-holding (during group prayer or to provide safety to young children).
- Contact that is a component of an acceptable group activity (such as an icebreaker, group prayer service, or sporting activity).

***Inappropriate Physical Contact and Not Allowed while Working with Minors***

I understand that the following forms of physical contact are not allowed when working with minors:

- Kissing.
- Close or prolonged embraces.
- Any type of massage.
- Touching or tousling a minor’s hair.
- Showering or bathing with a minor.
- Allowing a minor to sit on one’s shoulders or lap.
- Fondling or any type of genital contact.
- Piggy-back rides, tickling, wrestling, or physical horseplay.
- Any type of physical punishment such as slapping, spanking, or striking a minor.

***Communications and Confidentiality with Minors in Ministry***

Private communication with a minor is defined as any type and form of communication that takes place apart from an appropriate and approved ministry setting. Therefore, adults in ministry with minors shall not enter into any type of private communication with a minor that is not within the scope of their ministry, or any communication that would undermine the parent-child relationship, or serve to foster an inappropriate relationship with a minor.

***Diocesan Certification to Work in Ministry with Minors***

I understand and agree that I shall complete the following requirements prior to working in ministry with minors:

Criminal Offender Records Information (CORI)  
Approved Diocesan Safe Environment training  
Awareness of and commitment to the Code of Conduct for Diocesan Personnel  
*Appendix A*

### *Definitions*

#### Counselors/Spiritual Directors

There are some persons within the organization who have a role of being a counselor or a spiritual director as part of a ministerial relationship to a “client” or another member affiliated with the Diocese of Springfield and its parishes, schools, agencies or other ministries. These include pastors, counselors, and spiritual directors: clergy, staff, and volunteers who provide pastoral, spiritual, and/or therapeutic counseling services to individuals, families, or other groups.

Clergy may also have a role as a counselor or spiritual director.

Appropriate pastoral conduct is expected on behalf of all clergy, counselors and spiritual directors.

#### Client

For the purposes of this Code, the terminology of “client” refers to the person receiving the service provided within the ministerial relationship.

#### Adult volunteer

Adult volunteers are defined as those 18 or older.

Adult volunteers are not counselors. Their response to situations and conversations by minors may have potential legal implications and they shall, therefore, know their boundaries and what is appropriate behavior. The role of an adult volunteer is limited to compassionate listening, along with communicating concerns to the appropriate party, per the policy and Code of Conduct.

#### Child

For the purposes of this Code, “children,” “child,” “minor,” “youth,” or “young person” is defined to mean any person less than 18 years of age. Under no circumstances may a child be left alone to be in a supervisory role over other children. It is the responsibility of adults to properly supervise the children in their care.

#### Vulnerable adult

While each of us can be vulnerable in any given set of circumstances, the phrase “vulnerable adult” has a wide and varied definition. In the Diocese of Springfield and its parishes, schools, agencies or other ministries the terminology can apply, and is not limited to:

Any person in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally, limits their ability to understand or to want or otherwise resist the offense;

Persons 18 years of age and older, with physical, mental, emotional or behavioral conditions;

Adults with an illness, or a situation where there is a power differential that renders an inability to defend, protect or get help when injured or abused;

Individuals whose condition or disability impairs their ability to provide adequately for their own care, including adults who habitually lack the use of reason, along with individuals who have a court-appointed guardian;

The elderly, whose various circumstances might make them susceptible to persons or situations that cause them harm, or individuals who are residents or patients within hospitals, group homes, nursing homes, day service facilities, day activity centers, adult foster-care homes or an adult who receives care services from a licensed home care or personal care service within their own homes.

### Caregiver

A child’s parent, stepparent, guardian, or any household member entrusted with the responsibility for a child’s health or welfare.

Any other person entrusted with responsibility for a child’s welfare, whether in the child’s home, a relative’s home, a school setting, a child care setting (including babysitting), a foster home, a group care facility, or any other comparable setting. As such, “caregiver” includes, but is not limited to:

- School teachers
- Religious education teachers
- Babysitters
- School bus drivers
- Camp counselors

The “caregiver” definition shall be construed broadly and inclusively to encompass any person who, at the time in question, is entrusted with a degree of responsibility for the child.

### Independent Contractors

Independent Contractors are not employees of the Diocese. These entities or individuals who are hired by the Diocese of Springfield or any of its parishes, school, agencies, or affiliated ministries to accomplish certain tasks but do not have the right of control over those entities.

Independent Contractors include a wide spectrum of individuals such as religious order priests and deacons, tradespeople and other individuals and/or organization that utilize diocesan property and resources and are hired for a specific purpose. Independent contractors whose work is relevant to the Code of Conduct (e.g. religious order clergy, educators, etc.) shall be provided a copy of the Code of Conduct and are expected to abide by such.

#### Diocesan Personnel

Priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, administrators, educators, staff, volunteers, and independent contractors, as defined above.

#### Social Media

Social Media is defined as any form of electronic communication through which a user creates, utilizes, accesses, retrieves, and/or visits online communities or systems to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, Social Media is to encompass, but is not limited to, all of the following: email, texting, chat rooms, instant messaging, social networks, video messaging, on-line message boards, gaming systems, landline and mobile telephones, on-line voice communications, etc.

### *Appendix B*

#### Social Media Guidelines

- All decisions related to electronic communication with minors or vulnerable adults (hereinafter “youth”) must be made by a pastor, principal, or administrator. No individual employee or volunteer may use electronic communication with minors who participate in any of this organization’s activities without written permission from both the organization’s leadership and the minor’s parent or other responsible party. “Electronic communication” includes all aspects of social media as defined in the “Definitions” portion of this document.
  - No Diocesan Personnel shall collect email addresses, phone numbers or any other medium of communication from minors without written permission from parents or guardians.
  - Parents or guardians must designate, in writing, which form(s) of communication with children may be used and must provide the contact information.
  - In the case of elementary or middle school age children, parents shall always be contacted directly.
  - In the event of any direct communication between professionals, staff, or volunteers and minors, parents and/or guardians must be copied on the

- content of the communication.
- Electronic communication shall be brief and on topic using language appropriate for communicating with the minor and his or her parent or guardian. Additionally, all communication must conform to the Diocese of Springfield's Code of Conduct and Safe Environment policies, practices, and training. Communication that disregards or violates the Code of Conduct standards in any way will not be tolerated regardless of the medium used for conveyance.

The following guidelines apply to specific forms of electronic communication:

- Cell phones, texts, Twitter, Instagram and other Messaging services:
  - Diocesan Personnel will use office lines to conduct conversations with Diocese of Springfield services participants.
  - Except in case of an emergency, Diocesan Personnel will not call minors directly (on the minor's cell phone), and will instead contact parents or call family phones.
  - Diocesan Personnel will not share personal cell phone numbers with minors unless approved by parents, guardians, and administrators.
  - Diocesan Personnel will not communicate with minors by text or other electronic messaging service (Exception: A one-one-one messaging option on a group page sponsored by the Diocese of Springfield or its parishes, schools, agencies or affiliated ministries).
- Email
  - Diocesan Personnel must not contact youth from personal email accounts, and may only use official Diocese of Springfield accounts.
  - Except in exceptional circumstances, Diocesan Personnel must copy parents or guardians on all email communications. In the case of high school students, email shall go to the student and parent unless the parent consents that communication may only be sent to the student.
  - Diocesan Personnel may not add any minor to personal email lists. When copying minors on approved communications, blind copy options must be used.
  - If, at any time, Diocesan Personnel receive an inappropriate personal communication from anyone participating in, or affiliated with, the Diocese of Springfield, the individual shall maintain an electronic copy, print a hard copy, and notify either a supervisor or the Bishop immediately and the Office of Safe Environment.
- Social Networking Sites
  - Diocesan Personnel shall not use personal social networking sites to contact minors. The individual parish or agency can create a group or agency page strictly for agency related communications. These accounts must be

approved in advance by the appropriate minister, registered with the parish or agency, and labeled to reflect their official nature. More than one individual must have oversight over the content and internal messaging, although passwords and administrative authority for such pages shall be limited to the pastor or agency administrator or their designee.

- No personal contact information shall be provided in profiles or the accounts used on behalf of the representative of the Diocese of Springfield.
- Only official email addresses, office phone numbers, and job titles may be used.
- All accounts shall be set to maximize privacy. Parishes and agencies may publicize their presence on social media. However, no effort shall be made to seek out minors as participants on the sites.
- Diocesan Personnel shall ignore “friend requests” from minors that are addressed to the adult’s personal social media account/application.
- No pictures may be posted without written permission for all those appearing in the photo (for minors, this would be the parent or guardian), and persons may not be tagged or identified in a photo.
- Diocesan Personnel shall comment only on services or ministry-related threads from the ministry-related account.
- Diocesan Personnel shall not use instant messaging programs on social networking sites to communicate with minors, unless the material is recorded and kept on file, and reviewed by a supervisor prior to the posting.
- Supervisors and/or their designees shall monitor sponsored sites. Inappropriate posts shall be promptly removed/deleted.
- Monitoring responsibility also applies to any unofficial site created by third parties about the program or services. If inappropriate content is present, monitors shall report the pages/groups/users to the hosting site and ask that the site be removed. This includes, but is not limited to, unauthorized use of logos, bullying, harassment, or defamatory language.

I understand that while this list outlines key expectations, it is not exhaustive, and any failure to comply with established policies may lead to further disciplinary action, including potential termination of employment. I acknowledge receipt and acceptance of the Diocese’s Code of Conduct.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date