

Code of Ethical Principles and Standards for Church Employees and Significant Volunteers

Diocese of Jackson

Introduction:

As employees in the Church founded by Christ, those who minister within our parishes and institutions must always uphold Christian values and conduct. In addition to following the Gospel and its mandates, they will want to act properly at all times in light of contemporary society and its needs. This Code of Ethics does not presume to provide the answers to all ethical questions facing Church Employees and/or Volunteers. What it does establish is a set of general ethical principles and standards for their personal and professional lives. These principles and standards will aid the Church and its employees in evaluating ethical questions.

This code is not intended to supersede canon or civil law. It is hoped that it will aid in the training of new Church employees as part of the **Prevention Component of Protection of Children-Diocese of Jackson** document which is available on the diocesan website, www.jacksondiocese.org. Lastly, it will demand accountability from Church employees and significant volunteers who may fail to live within the ethical principles and standards of the Code.

Church employees include the following: All priests, deacons, religious men and women, all paid lay personnel and those who contract for services in offices and programs of the Diocese and also all lay persons who volunteer for work in offices and programs of the Diocese on a significant basis as defined in the section: Creating a Safe Environment For Our Children of the same document.

Responsibility for adherence to this Code of Ethical Principles and Standards rests with the Church employees themselves. However, disregard of this Code by Church employees will be dealt with by the appropriate employing/appointing organization's representative such as: program director, employee supervisor, pastor, lay ecclesial minister, mission coordinator, religious superior or bishop. Remedial action may take various forms from counseling to removal from ministry.

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

General Principles:

Five key principles undergird the ethical stance of this Code: ecclesial commitment, respect for others, integrity, competence and well-being. The ethical Church employee is one who embraces the principles of ecclesial commitment, integrity, respect for others, well-being and competence.

A. Ecclesial Commitment:

Church employees embrace the teaching of Jesus and work to promote the Gospel. They shall have an intimate knowledge of the scriptures, in accord with their position, and be able to apply scriptural values to everyday life in the Church.

Church employees shall exhibit a deep commitment to the Church, loyalty to the traditions of the past, attentiveness to the realities of the present, and readiness/preparedness for challenges of the future. They are responsible for providing for and nurturing the life of the community, especially its sacramental life.

Church employees must show a commitment not only to the parish/school family, but also to the larger community in which the parish/school is located. They must show a special care and concern for the needs of the poor and the oppressed in society. Church employees shall address community and social concerns by active reflection on Catholic social teachings. Church employees shall share the spirit of ecumenism in their interactions with other faith traditions.

B. Integrity:

Church employees are expected to be persons of integrity and must conduct themselves in an honest and open manner, free from deception or corruption. They shall handle the responsibilities of their office in a conscientious fashion. Employees in a Church that holds up a high moral standard for its members have a responsibility to lead by example.

C. Respect for others:

Church employees shall respect the rights, dignity and worth of each member of the Church community. Church employees respect each individual as a creation of God without regard to their economic status or degree of participation in the diocesan/parish or school life.

Church employees shall be sensitive to cultural differences among people and appreciate the opportunities that diversity brings. Church employees should take

the time to understand the collective journeys of their congregations and understand the role of history in diocesan/parish and school development.

Church employees are aware that issues of aging, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, physical and mental disabilities, and language all affect how the message of the Gospel is received and interpreted.

D. Well-being:

Church employees are expected to attend to their own human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral well-being.

Human Well-being:

Church employees have a duty to be attuned to their physical, mental and emotional health. They should be aware of warning signs in their behavior and moods that indicate conditions that can be detrimental to their health. Inappropriate use of alcohol or misuse of prescription drugs are examples. Church employees should immediately seek help when they identify warning signs in their professional or personal lives.

Church employees should be supportive of one another, in terms of both affirmation and holding one another accountable for their physical and emotional well-being.

Church employees should determine healthy limits in their work environment and live within these limits as much as possible. They should make use of allotted time for vacation and days away from the work environment.

Spiritual Well-being:

Church employees have a duty to stay attuned to their own spiritual health. Church employees must maintain and nurture an ongoing prayer life. Church leaders need to address their own spiritual needs in order to remain focused in the faith. Regularly meeting with a spiritual director is highly recommended.

Intellectual Well-being:

Church employees have a responsibility to attend to their ongoing intellectual development. Church employees should participate annually in seminars and workshops in areas that are relevant to their current ministry. Church employees should stay current through reading of both religious and secular sources. Church employees should make use of time and funding for ongoing formation.

Pastoral Well-being:

Church employees are responsible for providing for and nurturing the life of the parish community. They should know and respect the people to whom they have been given in ministry. As appropriate to their ministry, they should celebrate the sacraments with decorum, in fidelity to the official rites of the Roman Catholic

Church. Church employees should know and respect the policies and procedures of the Diocese of Jackson. Church employees should nurture in themselves the pastoral heart necessary to lead their people in word, worship and service.

E. Competence:

Church employees shall maintain high levels of professional competence in their particular ministry. Training, education and experience all contribute to make them competent and credible in their areas of expertise. Church employees shall not attempt to provide services in those areas in which they lack competence.

Ethical Standards in Professional Relationships

1. Administration

Church employees exercise just treatment of employees and volunteers in the day-to-day administrative operations of their ministries:

Church employees shall seek to relate to all people with respect, sensitivity and reverence. Meetings are to be conducted with patience and courtesy toward the views of others, in an environment where it is safe for others to offer constructive criticism.

Church employees seek to help others attain their full potential, supporting each person to live the life to which God calls them. They are to seek to work in ways that respect the different talents people bring to the Church.

Church employees exercise responsible stewardship of all diocesan/parish/school resources. They must also ensure that whatever their area of ministry, there is a clear accounting of diocesan/parish/school funds.

Personnel and other administrative decisions made by Church employees should not only meet civil and Canon Law obligations, but should reflect Catholic social teachings.

All Church employees who receive financial recompense for their ministerial service under stipulated contract terms or diocesan scales may not receive dual reimbursement for work, which falls ordinarily under the scope of their pastoral assignment or ministry (e.g. a pastor who teaches religious education may not receive both a pastor's salary and that of a director of religious education, etc.)

2. Conduct of Counseling

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

Church employees should not step beyond their competence in counseling situations. The parameters for Church leaders are dictated by their training or certification from a recognized professional association of peers, or licensure from the State of Mississippi.

If conducting group sessions, Church employees must insure that no individual is subject to trauma or abuse resulting from group interactions. The Church employees must state to group participants the nature of the group, and the parameters of confidentiality of all individual disclosures.

Church employees should not disclose information learned from counseling sessions. In beginning what is clearly a counseling relationship, the Church employee should inform the counselee that confidentiality is limited when there is clear and imminent danger. An official of Chancery Office and/or a supervisor at Catholic Charities should be contacted to determine whether the necessary authorities or other professionals should be informed of the situation.

In cases where the counselee is already in a counseling relationship with another professional, the Church employee should make clear what he/she can provide to the counselee. Generally, this should be confined to spiritual assistance.

Church employees who move to another parish while conducting counseling with parishioners should make appropriate referrals for continued care.

Church employees ordinarily do not begin a counseling relationship with someone with whom they have a preexisting relationship (i.e. employee, professional colleague).

Church employees should not engage in sexual intimacies with those whom they counsel.

Physical contact with a counselee can be misconstrued and should generally be avoided.

It should always be clear to both the Church employee and the counselee that a counseling relationship is in process. This can best be done when the counseling, especially if extended, is conducted in an appropriate setting and at appropriate times. Thus counseling should not be done in private living quarters or at places or times that would be ambiguous or misleading to the counselee.

Church employees should be cognizant at all times of the significance of boundaries in all counseling relationships. During the course of the counseling relationship, Church employees ordinarily should not socialize with counselees.

Church employees who conduct counseling should hold themselves accountable in that activity. This may be accomplished by engaging in professional peer consultation and/or supervision as appropriate. They should keep a calendar of times and places or contacts, especially in the case of more frequent meetings with the same person.

When a Church employee's independent judgment is impaired (for example, by prior or concurrent personal or professional relationships, where he or she becomes personally involved such as a personal friend, or where he or she becomes an advocate for one person against another), the Church employee should advise the party/parties that he or she can no longer provide counseling and refer him/her/them to other counselors.

3. Conduct with Minors

Church employees working with minors should use appropriate judgment to ensure trusting relationships marked by personal and professional integrity.

Church employees must be aware of their own vulnerability and that of any individual minor with whom they may be working. In every instance possible, a team approach to youth ministry activities should be considered. Church employees should avoid establishing any exclusive relationship with a minor and exercise due caution when they become aware of a minor desiring such a relationship. Both the participants and members of the Church community can misunderstand such relationships.

Physical contact with minors can be misconstrued by both minors and other adults, and should only occur under appropriate public circumstances.

Church employees should not use or supply alcohol and/or illegal drugs when working with minors.

Church employees should not provide any sexually explicit, inappropriate, or offensive materials to minors.

Providing overnight accommodations in rectories or other personal residences for parish minors, or other minors with whom the Church employee may have other than a close familial relationship is prohibited unless the minor is accompanied by his/her parent or legal guardian.

Church employees should read and understand diocesan policies and procedures concerning allegations of sexual misconduct involving minors or vulnerable adults.

Church employees should not promote or endorse the practice of “hazing” or any similar formal rite of initiation to become a member of any diocesan organization.

4. Sexual Conduct

Church employees should not exploit the trust of the parish community for sexual gain or intimacy.

Church employees should not exploit persons for sexual purposes.

It is the personal and professional obligation of the Church employee to be knowledgeable about what constitutes sexual exploitation of another and to be familiar with the laws of the State of Mississippi regarding sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, and sexual assault.

Church employees, both clergy, religious and lay people, who have made a commitment to celibacy are called to witness this in all relationships. Likewise, those who have made a marital commitment are called to witness to this fidelity in all their relationships.

Any allegations of sexual misconduct will be taken seriously and reported to the Victim Assistance Coordinator or the Director of Priests' Personnel if a priest or deacon is involved. Diocesan protocol and procedures will be followed to insure the rights of all involved and to facilitate justice for the aggrieved.

Church employees should be knowledgeable of the State of Mississippi regulations and know the proper reporting requirements as outlined in the Mississippi Reporting Statutes Reporting Procedures. Church employees also must comply with all mandatory reporting requirements except if the information was received under the seal of confession or privileged spiritual guidance. In such cases, no reporting can occur.

If Church employee is in doubt whether he/she should make a report, the report should be made and the Department of Human Services will determine as to whether an investigation is warranted.

5. Professional Behavior

Church employees should not engage in physical, psychological or verbal harassment of employees, volunteers, or parishioners and will not tolerate such harassment by other church employees or volunteers.

Church employees are committed to providing a professional work environment for their employees, which is totally free from such harassment. This commitment continues the diocesan policy of fair and equal employment of every person regardless of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, veteran, disability status or any other status protected by law. Church employees should provide a work environment that is free from intimidation and harassment based on any of these factors.

Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical or verbal behavior, which can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- physical or mental abuse;
- racial insults;
- unwelcome sexual advances or touching;
- sexual comments or sexual jokes;
- requests for sexual favors used as a condition of employment or affecting any personnel decision such as hiring, promotion, or compensation;
- display of offensive materials.

Harassment can occur as a result of a single severe incident or a pattern of conduct, which results in the creation of a hostile, offensive or intimidating work environment.

Church employees are to be aware that there is a clear policy on reporting harassment for both employees and volunteers. (c.f. General Policy Against Sexual Misconduct By Clergy or Religious, and the General Policy Against Sexual Misconduct by Lay Church Personnel, Catholic Diocese of Jackson.

Church employees are to follow the established procedure for reporting of harassment, and are to ensure that no retaliation for bringing forward a claim of harassment will be tolerated.

6. Confidentiality

Information disclosed to a Church employee during the course of counseling, advising, spiritual direction and/or and any other professional contact shall be held in strictest confidence.

Anyone who comes to the Church employee should feel that they are entering a relationship marked by respect, trust and confidentiality.

The Church employee is also bound to safeguard the confidentiality of any notes, files, or computer records pertaining to professional contact with individuals.

If consultation with another professional becomes necessary, utmost care should be taken to do so only by using non-identifying information; when this is not possible, the other professional must be bound by the same degree of confidentiality as the Church employee. If the other professional is not so bound, the disclosure should not be made.

When consultation is necessary, the employee must exercise great care to limit the content of the information to be shared. The employee must first determine: what is the precise information that the Church employee needs to have shared; with whom is the information to be shared; and why does it need to be shared.

Knowledge that arises from professional contact may be used in teaching, writing and preaching or other public presentations only when effective measures have been taken to absolutely safeguard individual identity and confidentiality.

Except as provided above with respect to consultation, confidential information can be disclosed only with the written, informed consent of the individual. In legal proceedings in which the Church employee is a defendant and the allegations stem from a professional contact, the disclosure of confidential information gained in that contact is permitted only to the minimum necessary to achieve the purpose of defense.

When entering into a counseling or pastoral relationship with a minor, Church employees should instruct the minor from the outset regarding several exceptions to the ordinary rights of confidentiality: threats of self-inflicted harm to the minor and threats against others because of the minor's emotional status or behavior. Threats of self-harm may also include suicidal ideation with a plan to commit the act and/or plans to commit violence against another. In these situations, which pose a grave risk for the minor's welfare and the welfare of others, communication of information to a parent or legal guardian and/or the civil authorities should occur expeditiously with or without the consent of the minor. The Church employee must exercise great care and judgment in determining the appropriateness of this kind of disclosure and in balancing the ultimate welfare of the minor being counseled with the duty to warn.

These obligations are independent and supplementary to the confidentiality of the confessional or other spiritual guidance. Under no circumstances whatsoever can there be any disclosure, even indirect, of information received through the sacrament of confession.

7. Records and Information

Appropriate confidentiality shall be maintained in creating, storing, accessing, transferring and disposing of parish or institutional records.

Sacramental records shall be regarded as confidential. When, for valid Church reporting or parish statistical purposes, information from these records is made public, great care must be taken to preserve the anonymity of individuals.

Except for information regarding adoption and legitimacy, sacramental records older than 70 years may be made accessible to the public. A trained staff member who is authorized to locate the requested information or supervise the use of such records shall handle requests for more recent records.

Parish financial records are to be held as confidential unless an appropriate governmental agency or office requires review. The Diocesan Department of Administration and Finance should be contacted regarding the release of all financial records.

The records of individual contributions to the parish shall be regarded as confidential.

8. Conflicts of Interest

Church employees should avoid conflict of interests, since the existence, or even the appearance, of a conflict of interest can call into question one's integrity and professional conduct.

The potential for a conflict of interests exists in many circumstances. Examples of such behavior by a Church employee include: conducting private business or other dealings with the Church or any of its members; accepting substantial (non token) gifts for services or favors; employing or engaging in transactions with friends or relatives; acting with partiality toward employees or Church members; or violating a confidence of another for professional gain.

Disclosure of all relevant factors can in some circumstances lessen the potential for a conflict of interest.

9. Reporting Misconduct

Church employees have a responsibility to report ethical misconduct on the part of other Church employees.

In cases where there are clear indications of illegal actions by a Church employee, notification should be made immediately to the proper civil and Church authorities.

In cases where there are clear indicators of unethical, but not illegal actions by a Church employee, notification should be made to the proper Church authorities.

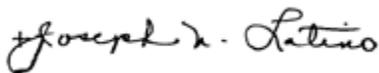
When Church employees believe that one of their colleagues may have violated this Code of Ethical Standards, they should attempt to solve the issue, if possible, by bringing it to the attention of the individual. If this fails, the Church employee shall take further action by reporting to the supervisor or next higher authority, or by referral to the Chancery Office.

All accusations and concerns, either past or present, involving the sexual abuse of a minor and/or adult sexual exploitations, as defined by Mississippi Law, must be reported promptly to the Victim Assistance Coordinator or the Director of Priests' Personnel.

When Church employees are uncertain whether a particular situation or course of conduct would violate this Code of Ethical Principles and Standards for Church Employees, they should consult with their immediate supervisor, who may wish to seek further clarification from the Chancellor's office in order to determine the proper response.

This document revises and replaces the Code of Ethical Principles and Standards for Church Employees and Significant Volunteers adopted by the Diocese of Jackson on October 10, 2003.

Given at Jackson, Mississippi this the 24th day of July 2009.



Joseph N. Latino
Bishop of Jackson



Rev. Msgr. Elvin Sunds
Chancellor