

Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse

Safe Environment Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct establishes a set of general principles, ethical standards, and mandatory protocols for life and ministry by which that we must abide. However, this Code of Conduct does not presume to represent all situations that arise. Responsibility for adherence to this policy rests with each individual and it requires accountability from those who fail to abide by its terms.

It begins with our common agreement that *all* clergy, *all* religious, *all* employees, and *all* volunteers whose ministry or role places them in regular contact with children, young people, or vulnerable adults will represent and practice the teachings of the Catholic faith in behavior, attire, and language. We must be committed to safeguarding, at all times, the well-being of those entrusted to our care by establishing and maintaining appropriate physical and emotional boundaries.

While **employed by** or **volunteering for any diocesan entity**, I am a representative of the Diocese of Syracuse and therefore I agree to the following:

1. I will not engage a child, young person, or vulnerable adult in a sexual manner.
2. I will not possess, view or share any child pornography, including, but not limited to: printed material, photos or images by electronic conveyance, recordings, video/films, games, software, email, or social media, or other digital communication.

During my hours of **employment** or **volunteering for any diocesan entity**, I am a representative of the Diocese of Syracuse. I will maintain appropriate *boundaries* with children, young people, and vulnerable adults and therefore:

1. I will ensure my one-on-one contact with a child, young person, or vulnerable adult be conducted in a public area in the view of other qualified adults. (This does not apply to the confessional.)

* A “qualified adult” is defined as a person who is fully credentialed and current his/her Safe Environment credentialing.

2. I understand I cannot be alone with any child(ren) or young person/people engaged in a diocesan, school, or agency activity without another qualified adult in the immediate area.
3. I will avoid being alone with a child, young person, or vulnerable adult in bathroom or shower facilities, locker rooms, or dressing rooms. Exceptions may be made in response to the health or safety of the child, young person, or vulnerable adult.
4. I will not drive children, young people, or vulnerable adults alone. At least two adults, one qualified, must be present in the vehicle when transporting to/from diocesan related activities.

**** If you are affiliated with Catholic Charities, Faith Formation, Youth and Young Adult Ministry and/or Catholic Schools, refer to your supervisor for additional program-specific guidelines for the above statements (#2, #3, & #4).***

5. I will ensure that offices, classrooms, or other venues where I meet with children, young people, or vulnerable adults have visibility to a hallway or common area (i.e. a window or an open door) and are immediately accessible to other qualified adults.
6. I will not make any demeaning comments or jokes based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, or physical appearance.
7. I will not use any language or discipline that ridicules, threatens, degrades, frightens, or humiliates including, but not limited to yelling, bullying, use of derogatory names, or intimidation.
8. I will not use any physical discipline, force, retaliation or correction including, but not limited to spanking, striking, shaking, pinching or slapping.
9. I will ensure that physical contact with children, young people, or vulnerable adults be public, appropriate, and non-sexual in nature.
10. I will not possess, use, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
11. I will not use tobacco products in the presence of children, young people, or vulnerable adults.
12. I understand that items designed as weapons or that have the appearance of weapons are strictly prohibited.
13. I will not present gifts to a child, young person or vulnerable adult that would not ordinarily gifted to an entire group of children, young people, or vulnerable adults, excluding awards.
14. Individual gifts given to a child, young person or vulnerable adult must have prior written approval from the parent/guardian and the pastor/supervisor.
15. I will not photograph and/or film children, young people, or vulnerable adults at diocesan-related events for *personal* use or distribution.
16. I understand that all programs, groups, or activities must have prior approval of the administration of the parish, school, or agency.

Social Media

The primary purpose of social media and digital communication is to provide information related to a ministry, school or event. Note that social media/digital communication is **not confidential** and may be shared or reposted to others.

Social media/digital communication includes but is not limited to texting, email, photos or images, recordings, video/films, software, and social media apps.

1. I will not speak to or engage a child, young person or vulnerable adult in sexually explicit or suggestive language, comments or jokes including, but not limited to: printed material, photos or images by electronic conveyance, recordings, video/films, games, software, or social media, email or other digital communication.
2. I will not view or share any sexually explicit or suggestive material, including pornography, with a child, young person or vulnerable adult, including, but not limited to: printed material, photos or images by electronic conveyance, recordings, video/films, games, software, or social media, email or other digital communication.
3. Except for the delivery of ministry-related information for the program I am providing, I will not interact or communicate with unrelated children, young people, or vulnerable adults to/from a cell phone; via a telephone; or other forms of social media/digital communications.
4. My supervisor/pastor and the parent/guardian of the minor must be copied on all correspondence, including social media/digital communication.
5. I will not use messaging apps for use as communication with children, young people, or vulnerable adults due to the inability to retain a record of communication.
6. I will not communicate with minors outside of the hours of 8am – 9pm except in the event of an emergency or the need to communicate time-sensitive materials.
7. I will not allow a child, young adult, or vulnerable adult use my personal electronic devices or to gain access to my personal social media or email accounts.

Reporting

I will ***immediately*** report any illegal activity by any individual (clergy, religious, diocesan/parish/agency employee or diocesan/parish/agency volunteer) to the appropriate local civil authority.

I will ***immediately*** report concerning, suspicious or unethical behavior(s) or communications by clergy, religious, diocesan/parish/agency employees or diocesan/parish/agency volunteers that is contrary to this Code of Conduct to my pastor/supervisor and the diocesan Office of Safe Environment at 315.470.1421 or at safeenvironment@syrдио.org.

I will cooperate with civil or diocesan investigations of an alleged incident.