

Policies: Sexual Conduct¹⁰

- 1) **General Policy.** Sexual misconduct in any form is unacceptable behavior for any cleric, lay person, volunteer or employee. The Diocese reaffirms the principle that employees as well as church members have the right to be free from sexual misconduct including sexual harassment. Any behavior determined to be sexual misconduct will result in appropriate disciplinary action which may include for employees termination of employment, and for clerics, deposition.
- 2) **Youth Policy.** The Diocese prohibits any relationship between minors and anyone (i) who has a civil or criminal record of child sexual abuse, (ii) who has admitted inflicting prior sexual abuse, or (iii) who is known to have paraphiliac diagnosis¹¹ as defined by the American Psychiatric Association.
- 3) **Sexual Harassment.** The Diocese reaffirms the principle that harassment in any form is both inappropriate and unacceptable behavior. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and may be a violation of federal law under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and state law, and may be verbal, nonverbal or visual. This includes any unwelcomed sexual behavior where there is an employment, mentor or colleague relationship between persons involved. This includes but is not limited to:
 - unwelcome sexually-oriented humor or language
 - questions or comments about sexual behavior or preference
 - unwelcome or undesired physical contact
 - inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance
 - repeated requests for social engagements
- 4) **Sexual Exploitation.** This involves sexual or romantic relationships [actual or attempted] between a *church worker* and a person with whom she/he has a *pastoral relationship*, **whether or not** there is apparent **consent** from the individual. Such exploitation constitutes a betrayal of trust, and includes any of these activities during the course of the *pastoral relationship*.
 - sexual intercourse
 - erotic kissing
 - touching of genital area/breasts
 - verbal suggestions of sexual involvement
 - use of force [physical/emotional/supervisory] to gain sexual gratification

Boundary Violations: A boundary defines what is not appropriate or comfortable behavior.

Boundaries are violated when someone says or does something that another person feels is offensive, frightening, disrespectful, or injurious. A boundary violation can be verbal or physical. Boundaries provide limits that allow for safe connections between “you” and “me.”

- 5) **Sexual Misconduct.** The term sexual misconduct includes sexual abuse, harassment or exploitation:
 - a. *Sexual abuse* or *sexual molestation* is sexual involvement or sexual contact with a person who is a minor or who is legally incompetent;
 - b. *Sexual harassment* is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other conduct of a sexual nature including sexually-oriented humor or language; questions or comments about sexual behavior or preference unrelated to employment qualifications; undesired physical contact; inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance; or repeated unwelcome requests for social engagements;

¹⁰ First draft was submitted for review to the Standing Committee for their meeting August 19, 2003, and to the Diocesan Council for approval at their meeting August 23, 2003.

¹¹ e.g., pedophilia, exhibitionism, voyeurism.

- c. *Sexual exploitation* is the development of or the attempt to develop a sexual relationship between a cleric, employee or volunteer and a person with whom there is a pastoral relationship, whether or not there is consent.

6) **Allegations of Misconduct.** Allegations of misconduct may be reported to the Bishop or to individuals designated by the Bishop as Report Persons. In certain situations, defined under Title IV of the Canons of The Episcopal Church, a Charge may be filed directly with the Standing Committee. Allegations of sexual harassment of employees also may be reported to the Florida Commission on Human Relations and the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Application: Sexual Conduct Policy ¹²

- 1) These policies are equally applicable to every congregation and
 - a) Church-affiliated schools (including pre-schools)
 - b) movements within the Diocese such as Cursillo, Kairos, all youth programs or mission trips,
 - c) to facilities such as DaySpring or to
 - d) any other Diocese-related institution or group.
- 2) Those responsible for management or leadership of such organizations will fulfill the same reporting, investigative and other responsibilities described for congregations.
- 3) In cases of sexual abuse, certain duties fall upon Church personnel regardless of the identity of the perpetrator or the involvement of the Church. Church Leaders need to know that:
 - a) Sexual misconduct extends to “consensual acts”,
 - b) It is not dependent upon the existence of physical violence
 - c) There is almost always disparity in relationships and perceived power, “consent” is not possible
- 4) Any and all allegations will be taken seriously, and this uniform protocol will be used to insure justice and consistency.
- 5) We recognize the possibility of wrongful allegations occurring. A shared approach involving the Bishop, legal, mental health, and pastoral approaches is highly desirable.
- 6) Open communication between all involved will be encouraged while respecting privacy, which precludes involving anyone who is not directly involved or needed in evaluating a case. The Diocesan Office, Standing Committee and Youth Council, are committed to continuing dialogue and communication of all of these issues.
- 7) These standards will be evaluated and updated as needed.
- 8) Every instance of sexual misconduct must be regarded as serious and receive attention of the highest priority by all clergy and lay leadership of congregations. There are few if any matters on any Church agenda which surpass these in importance, in spiritual terms, in human terms, in terms of potential legal consequences to all of the individuals involved.

Standards and Training:

People with hiring authority for employees working in any institution in the Diocese will obtain a background check prior to hiring.

- 1) **Background Checks** [including Criminal convictions] will be obtained for all clergy, lay professionals or volunteers who work with children and youth.

¹² Continuing policy rationale from 1996 Diocesan Manual.

- 2) For **employees entrusted with church funds** an **employment credit check and a check for criminal convictions** are required prior to hiring.
- 3) For **employees who routinely drive on church business** a **driving record check** and a **check of criminal convictions** is required prior to hiring.
- 4) A minimum of four (4) hours of training in the area of **child sexual abuse prevention & sexual harassment in employment** is required for:
 - a) **All clergy**
 - b) **All employees**
 - c) **Volunteers who work with children & youth**
 - d) **Sunday school teachers**
 - e) **Eucharistic visitors**
 - f) **Diocesan leadership**

Power is cumulative. It comes from another's vulnerability and this imbalance demands trustworthy behavior. Power and responsibility must be linked so that power is used in positive and beneficial ways. A **Church Worker** is any member of the Clergy [paid, volunteer, non-stipendiary, honorary]; any Lay Employee; any Lay Person working on behalf of the Church who is engaged in pastoral relationships.

Pastoral Relationships are relationships of trust between any Clergy Person, Lay Church Worker, Employee or Volunteer who:

- 1) provides counseling, pastoral care, spiritual direction, or spiritual guidance; or
 - 2) receives a confession or confidential or privileged information; or
 - 3) is in any mentoring or other relationship dependent upon trust
- and any person** [child, youth or adult] who is connected to the congregation in any way, either as a member, visitor, client, etc.

Standards for Programs for Youth and Young Adults

[A Community Covenant incorporating these standards will be used for all Diocesan Youth Events. This Covenant and the other forms used for Youth Events can be found in the Youth Resources section]

Standards for SAFETY at any Events: These standards apply to all diocesan events that involve youth, i.e., those under the age of 18, or those over 18 who are still in high school. Only adults (25 or older – unless a 21-25 year old is employed by a church for youth work) may be advisors. Two adult supervisors must be present during any youth activity. No person attending any diocesan event is to be physically, emotionally, or sexually abused.

- 1) **Physical abuse** is defined as bodily injury of one person by another.
- 2) **Emotional abuse** is the devaluing of another, such as name-calling or indicating to another that he/she is worthless.
- 3) **Sexual abuse** is any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between children when there is an unequal distribution of power, such as when one is significantly older or larger. In addition, sexual misconduct will not be tolerated. Sexual misconduct includes sexual abuse, exposing a child or youth to sexually provocative material, inappropriate exposure by an adult to a youth, etc.

Standards for Adults who Work with Youth

- 1) All adult advisors are to refrain from giving personal gifts or money privately to youth without first consulting the parents, or youth advisor or rector/vicar. Individual gift-giving is discouraged, unless all youth are included.
- 2) Youth advisors will meet regularly to openly discuss problems, accountability, policy clarification, personal feelings, and issues that interfere with youth ministry efforts. These meetings should be held under the supervision of a lay youth professional or clergy person. Annual Diocesan training for adults who work with youth will be provided each August. If there is sufficient need for additional training, a spring training session will be scheduled
- 3) No adult youth worker is to date a youth or become romantically or sexually involved with a youth or a child.
- 4) **All adult workers will be screened.** When a person has expressed an interest in working with children and/or youth, and has attended a church for 6-12 months, a formal interview with the rector/vicar, the person[s] responsible for youth ministries [e.g.: vestry person, youth director, etc.] is required. This “waiting period” will give the church an additional opportunity to evaluate applicants and volunteers, and will help to repel persons seeking immediate access to children. After the interview, the person must comply with the Diocesan policies. Copies of verification must be kept at both the local church office and at the Diocesan Office.
- 5) **Safeguarding God’s Children Training.** Training will be conducted at least 3 times a year.
- 6) **Background Check** [either initiated by the Church or through the Diocesan Office]. Minimum requirements for Adults who supervise or work with youth include:
 - a. **Conviction Check** [for all]
 - b. **Driving Record** [if driving children/youth]
 - c. **Credit Check** [if handling monies for children/youth events]
- 7) Any adult convicted of prior incidents of sexual misconduct or abuse will not be used in any capacity for diocesan youth programs. Any adult who is accused of improper behavior is to be removed from any positions which would give him/her access to children or youths, until the situation is resolved.

Standards for Youth Participants at Events:

- 1) **Illegal drugs, alcohol, or over-the-counter stimulants** may not be used or be in possession of any adults or youth on or at diocesan youth activities. Anyone found with these substances will be excluded from the activity and sent home. **All diocesan youth activities prohibit smoking for ALL participants, team members and adults/sponsors.**
- 2) Youth left at a site for a diocesan activity are required to remain there under the supervision of the advisors until they have been picked up, and signed out by their parents/guardians. Parish adult advisors who participate in the activity and bring their youth to an event are required to maintain supervision of them.
- 3) ***Sexual relations between youth and/or inappropriate displays of affection will result in the youth involved being sent home.***
- 4) All youth must have parental/guardian, and rector/vicar’s permission to attend any diocesan event.
- 5) Once youth “check -in” at a diocesan event, any cars, trucks or other vehicles driven by youth to the event are to be parked in a designated area, and all keys are to be turned in to the adult sponsor or director of the activity or event. No youth is to drive during the course of the event or activity until returning home at the conclusion of the event.
- 6) All participants, youth and adults, will take responsibility for dressing appropriately;
 - Under garments may not be exposed
 - Pajamas may be worn only in sleeping area
 - Straps on tank shirts must be at least two inches wide
 - Midriffs may not be exposed
 - Finger-tip rule applies to shorts
 - Modest bathing suits are required. In the event a participant wears an immodest suit, they will be required to wear a dark colored t-shirt – bathing suits may not be worn in the dining hall
 - Participants will be asked to change clothes if their attire is inappropriate

- Flip-flops, sandals and any other open toed shoes are not allowed on the waterfront or ropes/challenge course. Only closed toed shoes such as water shoes, old sneakers, or similar footwear are acceptable.
- Shoes must worn be at all times. The only exception are the pool decks

Standards for Events

- 1) No one will be discriminated against at any diocesan activity on the basis of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, physical disability, origin, ancestry, or religion.
- 2) No youth event in the diocese shall have less than two adult advisors. At the minimum, the national church standard of **one adult for every five** youth will be followed. The adult leadership will be reflective of the youth attending so that if there are male and female youth there must be male and female adult advisors. Experienced adult youth workers are to be included with adults who are newcomers to youth ministry
- 3) **No youth may attend any Diocesan Youth Event, Provincial/National Program without meeting Diocesan requirements for supervision.**
- 4) Separate sleeping arrangements for males and females will be provided for all overnight activities/events. A single adult and a single youth will never sleep alone in the same quarters. In addition, separate bathroom/shower facilities will be provided by gender (or specific times to use a single facility). Adult sponsors/advisors must either use separate shower facilities, or do so at a different time from the youth.
- 5) Adult advisors may not drop-off and/or pickup youth without being accompanied by another adult. Families should be made clearly aware that the family or parish is responsible for transporting children/youth to and from Church or Diocesan activities. This should be done by family members or a person selected, approved and identified to the parish or diocesan group. Children/youth may only be picked up by parents/guardians unless prior written permission naming the non-family member who is to provide transportation. Children and youth should never be allowed to remain alone on Church or diocesan property at the conclusion of activities. Two adults must remain until the last participant has departed
- 6) No circumstances should exist in which one adult is present with only one child/youth [e.g. riding in an automobile, or assignment to sleeping quarters, or a meeting or event which only one child/youth attends. At times when one-on-one interactions with youth cannot be avoided, another adult is to be present or must be aware of the place of consultation and who is being counseled. Every attempt will be made for the counseling to take place in a public place such as a corner away from but in clear view of others. Seclusion is to be avoided.
- 7) Children/youth are to be checked into an event or activity at a designated “registration area”, and are to be signed out by the person providing return transportation at the designated sign-out area.
- 8) All child/youth bringing prescription or over-the-counter medication must be in the original container, labeled with the participant’s name and dosage. Medication must be checked in with the event nurse at registration for the event.
- 9) All youth events are to function with an open-door policy. Clergy, parents, church staff members, parishioners all have a right to observe any youth activity at any time. All visitors to a youth activity/event must provide identification, and must sign-in/sign-out of the activity/event.
- 10) No one is to strike or hit anyone at any time. No weapons are to be brought to diocesan youth activities. Anyone in possession of any weapon will be sent home
- 11) No one is to be deprived of the basic human needs of food, shelter, sleep and clothing at any diocesan event. The national requirement is to provide 8 hours of sleep per night for youth events.

Standards for Young Adult Events [for Young Adults 18 years and older only]

We desire to build a welcoming and compassionate community of individuals knit together by the love of Christ and a shared quest for spiritual growth. Therefore, we pledge to refrain from those activities which

can produce divisions and destroy the safety of the community that we endeavor to create. We will abide by the following rules to insure a community that is Christ-centered:

- No alcohol or non-prescription drugs will be used while at any Diocese of SWFLA Young Adult event
- No persons will abuse, destroy deface or vandalize any property of the church or the diocese
- No persons will promote, engage in or force anyone else to engage in any behavior that constitutes sexual harassment or sexual or physical abuse
- Persons wishing to smoke will do so in a designated area
- No firearms or weapons of any type will be allowed

In addition to the above we will welcome each individual who wishes to join us and revel in the gifts that the diversity of our races, genders, religions, sexual orientations, ethnicities, and political views bring to our community.

I have read the above and desire to be an active part of such a community. I realize that my presence at the Youth Event will leave an impact on both the environment and the people around me, and I will endeavor to make that impact a positive one.

I authorize such medical treatment as necessary, and such additional procedures as are considered necessary during the course of medical examination. I hereby certify that no guarantee or assurance has been made as to the results that may be obtained.

I agree to grant the Diocese of Southwest Florida permission to photograph, videotape, or audiotape my participation in the any diocesan Young Adult Event.

Print Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Procedures to follow if an Incident Occurs

Any person who feels that he or she has experienced improper behavior is encouraged to report it to an adult advisor, the diocesan director of youth, young adult and higher education ministries, or the bishop as soon as possible. Any adult advisor who receives a report of any suspected or actual misconduct or abuse must report it to **the bishop at (800) 992-7699 or the dean of your deanery within 72 hours**. Anyone who has any questions about a specific situation and whether they should report it , is encouraged to report it anyway.

If there is reason to suspect there has been child sexual abuse, call the **Florida Abuse Hotline at (800) 962-2873**.

The parish treasurer should provide notification to the insurer which provide coverage to the congregation. (Notification should be put in the file as to the name of the person giving this notice, the name of the person to whom the notification is given, and the date and time.)

Code of Ethics

Diocese of Southwest Florida
As approved by the Standing Committee Sept. 6, 2000

A Covenant Based Relationship

The nature of a Christian vocation is a covenant relationship where the love of God is the binding force and the source of grace that enables all to be faithful. The relationship between church leaders, especially the clergy, and their congregations is only effective where the bond between them is based on trust. Therefore, ethical norms must not only be seen legalistically, but as a loving means by which those who work within and represent, the church can be open to helping themselves, and those they care about, to avoid breaches of trust.

Specifically, the purpose of this Code of Ethics is:

- To affirm the rights of all persons.
- To emphasize that the behavior of individuals defines the realms of life and ministry.
- To set appropriate boundaries.
- To encourage the identification and resolution of issues before they become problems.
- To provide opportunities for support and help.
- To enable church members to be effective examples in word and action.

Each congregation must keep on file statements signed by its clergy, other employees, volunteers who regularly supervise youth activities, and vestry members, indicating that they have received the Code of Ethical Conduct; understand its contents, and affirm their commitment to these standards.

Prevention can avoid problems, for example, through background checks for prospective employees and volunteers who regularly supervise youth activities. Each congregation should be familiar with Diocesan policies, especially those concerning employment practices and guidelines for working with children. (See Diocesan Manual, *Policies and Procedures Regarding Sexual Misconduct*, dated 12/01/96.)

I. Responsibilities for Self

As members of the church, we have made a commitment to pattern our lives in accordance with the teachings of Christ, so that we may be wholesome examples. One part of this commitment is to care for God's gift which we embody in ourselves and thus to proclaim in deed as well as word the Gospel of Jesus Christ by fashioning our lives in accordance with its precepts.

We express this care by intentionally:

- giving adequate attention to our spiritual physical and emotional health.
- committing ourselves to personal care and growth through supervisory, collegial or therapeutic support and spiritual direction; and when there is need, identified by ourselves, our friends or colleagues, by seeking appropriate assistance for our own personal problems or conflicts.
- providing time for personal growth, education and spiritual nourishment, as well as by encouraging clergy and staff to comply with the policies of the Diocesan Manual, Diocese of Southwest Florida, regarding vacations, sabbatical leave and continuing education.
- spending significant time with our family, household and community.
- seeking avenues of involvement in the wider community which allows us to relate to others in ways other than as congregational leaders.

II. Confidentiality

The author of the letter of James well understood the importance of what we choose to say or not to say, recognizing that one of the most common human failings is the inability to control one's tongue, especially to keep silent [James 3].

Much of the work undertaken in the church is of a personal and confidential nature. As members or employees of the church, we should treat our work in a confidential manner. Specifically, the following standards should be upheld:

- "The secrecy of a confession is morally absolute for the confessor, and must under no circumstances be broken." [Book of Common Prayer, page 446]
- Information received other than through sacramental confession (counseling, spiritual direction, supervision, etc.) should be kept confidential unless:
 - a. Permission is given to share the information.
 - b. The law requires disclosure, such as in instances of child abuse.
 - c. A careful examination of the likely consequences of disclosure upon the individual, other persons, and the community, leads to the conclusion that, in the leader's best judgment, it is more responsible to disclose the information. If disclosure is indicated, it should occur only after consultation with the priest-in-charge.
- In all other matters and conversations, church members must respect the privacy of others.

III. Pastoral Relationships

God calls each of us to wholeness through Jesus Christ and to know God's redemptive love through participation in the Body of Christ, which is the Church. Within the church, and for its nurture, God calls some to serve as counselors, entrusting to them the responsibility to care for those whom they serve as counselors. Faithful to this calling, and to promote healing and trust in pastoral relationships, we commit ourselves to the following standards:

In all pastoral relationships, we should:

- Make appropriate referrals when the needs of a counselee exceed those that the counselor can competently provide.
- Either be supervised on an ongoing basis by a mental health professional or refer the person being counseled to such a professional after six sessions around a given issue.
- Respect the right of the counselee to make decisions, and to help the counselee to understand the consequences of their decisions.
- Be cognizant of the vulnerability that exists between them and the counselee, and must not exploit the trust and dependency of these persons.

In all pastoral relationships we should not:

- Claim directly, or by implication, professional qualifications that exceed our actual qualifications or abilities.
- Charge fees or accept donations for pastoral care. Any persons charging fees for counseling outside the scope of church employment must have the appropriate professional credentials and carry their own professional liability insurance.
- Work in isolation, but must maintain interprofessional associations for the purposes of consultation, support and referrals.

In order to assure that the relationships within the Body of Christ remain free of conflicts, or the appearance of overreaching, members of the Church should not accept responsibility for the financial affairs of those in

their pastoral care, such as service as a financial advisor, executor, trustee, personal representative, or a power of attorney.

IV. Finances

Throughout the scriptures, God demands justice and charity. We, as stewards, are called to exemplify a spirit of integrity, justice, charity, and compassion in all financial matters.

The following standards enable us to be faithful in matters of financial responsibility.

- The biblical tithing is the minimum standard of giving.
- Faithful stewardship of discretionary funds, defined as those funds to be used at the discretion of an individual clergy person, requires:
 - a. Clear written boundaries for use of these funds.
 - b. That such funds only be used for the needs of others.
 - c. Clarifying to the donors that discretionary gifts are not accepted for specific purposes.
 - d. Compliance with the *Internal Revenue Code*.

In addition, the role of clergy in financial matters of the congregation is not to control those operations, but to see that such matters are carried out morally and in accordance with the Diocesan Manual, Diocese of Southwest Florida, revised 12/01/96.

Congregations have both a canonical and an ethical obligation to provide financial support, at a level that allows the clergy to meet their financial needs without supplemental income, to those priests who serve the congregations.

Clergypersons are not to accept monetary gifts in excess of \$1,500.00 from members of their parish.

V. Clarity of Relationships

Effective family relationships are built on a system of empathy, mutual support, and unconditional love. Effective organizational relationships are built on a system where responsibility, accountability, and authority are clearly defined. Family relationships within a church organization will impact how we deal with others, and how others deal with us.

For these reasons, the hiring, supervision or utilization of family members within the same church organization should be avoided.

VI. Exploitation of Others

By virtue of our Baptismal Vows, we are charged to love, to serve and to nourish Christ's people, and to be vehicles of Christ's reconciling love. As members of the church, we shall treat others in ways that affirm life, not diminish it.

Exploitation concerns the abuse of power, disregard of another's dignity, and a betrayal of the trust and integrity of the professional relationship. All of us in the church, lay and ordained, should seek to live within the following guidelines as an expression of our desire to "love and serve Christ in all persons." (*Book of Common Prayer*, page 305.)

- Exploitation of others by conduct will not be allowed. Clear boundaries must be established and maintained by pastors and counselors to guard against any exploitation of a relationship of trust or dependence. The nature of these relationships is such that true consent to exploitive behavior is never possible.
- Exploitation can occur in the following ways:

1. **Sexual Abuse:** Sexual abuse or sexual molestation of any person, including but not limited to, any sexual involvement or sexual contact with a person who is a minor or who is legally incompetent. This conduct includes, but is not limited to conduct which violates the criminal law. (Florida Statutes, Title XL VI, Chapter 775)
 2. **Sexual Harassment:** Sexually oriented humor or language; questions or comments about sexual behavior or preference; undesired physical contact; inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance; or repeated requests for social engagements.
 3. **Sexual Exploitation:** Shall include, but not be limited to, the development of, or the attempt to, develop a sexual relationship between a clergyperson, employee or volunteer and any person to whom such clergyperson, employee or volunteer provides counseling, pastoral care, spiritual direction or spiritual guidance or from whom such clergyperson, employee or volunteer has received confessional confidential or privileged information.
 4. **Inappropriate Contact:** Shall include behavior, suggestions or activity which compromise the physical and emotional health or welfare, of children and youth. Those with criminal or civil records of child abuse, or those with mental health diagnoses of pedophilia, exhibitionism or voyeurism or those who have admitted prior sexual abuse are prohibited from interaction with children and youth.
- Marriage is affirmed as the only appropriate setting for sexual intimacy. Employees of the church are expected to avoid any behavior, in word or deed, which would give public offense or become an impediment in their relationships with others. By exercising common sense, they should avoid places and circumstances where temptations may exist, and they should be aware of the danger signs of sexual boundary breakdown.
 - Unmarried employees should exercise common sense and discretion in dating, continuing to model healthy relationships within the congregation. Dating is never appropriate within a pastoral or a counseling relationship.
 - Behavior that attacks, belittles or maligns another on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, physical disabilities or age is not allowed.
 - Those who learn of exploitative behavior have an ethical and may have a legal responsibility to report such behavior, within the guidelines of confidentiality outlined above.

VII. Assumptions Regarding Allegations of Misconduct

The policies regarding allegations of misconduct are based on the following assumptions:

- Prevention can avoid problems. By acknowledging a shared set of ethical expectations, thoroughly investigating prospective employees, and establishing and enforcing guidelines for these sensitive areas in our lives together, we can avoid actions and situations which distract us from, and may be destructive to, our shared spiritual journey.
- Every allegation of misconduct deserves serious consideration, and a timely response. Failure to respond promptly and appropriately to an allegation of misconduct can cause further damage, both to potential victims and to clergypersons, church employees, and volunteers who may be wrongly accused of misconduct.
- The Bishop must be made aware of alleged incidents of misconduct immediately. The Bishop, and others in positions of authority, hold both pastoral and disciplinary responsibilities. The Bishop, and others in positions of authority may ask for the assistance of, and consult with, other persons in confidence with respect to alleged incidents of misconduct.
- The church's pastoral concern is for the accused, and those making accusation, as well as possible victims, and the families and congregations of all involved. In cases where misconduct has been established, pastoral care should include legal and mental health concerns.