

2.1.3.1 General Norms of Pastoral Conduct

1. All clergy, consecrated persons, employees and volunteers who are authorized to provide any kind of service or function on behalf of the diocese and its institutions are obliged to protect the human rights, among which are the right to bodily and spiritual integrity and human dignity, and the ecclesiastical rights of those whom they serve on behalf of the Church. ^[1]

2. They are to hold themselves strictly subject to the highest ethical standards. Thus, they are obliged to avoid both moral and legal wrongdoing, giving scandal, creating an actual or perceived risk of wrongdoing, and from placing themselves or others in any other spiritual or physical danger. They are to be sensitive to special situations presented by the emotionally vulnerable and the developmentally disabled who seek service.

3. They are directly and fully responsible for establishing and maintaining clear boundaries that are appropriate to the relationship and their activities.

a. They are to conduct activities in appropriate settings and never in settings that are conducive to isolation, such as bedrooms, out-of-the-way places, or rooms that lack open access (i.e., that lack windows on doors and walls so that others could see although not hear). (Also see [#5.E.5](#) Place of Confession and Confessionals.) Additionally, for pastoral activities exclusively for minors, such as youth ministry programs, such activities may not take place in private living quarters.

b. Employees, consecrated persons, and adult volunteers are prohibited from being alone (i.e., out of sight of at least one other adult) with any unrelated minor while serving as an employee or volunteer of the Diocese, Parish, or other diocesan entity, subject to common sense exceptions, such as emergency situations, interactions with a minor that are incidental and not extended, parents transporting their children or other related individuals, and employees or volunteers transporting the children of friends and neighbors. This subparagraph does not apply to employees and volunteers providing services in or for Schools or providing Catholic education.¹

c. Clergy are prohibited from being alone with any unrelated minor except when hearing confession in a confessional, and except for common sense exceptions such as emergency situations or circumstances where interaction is incidental and not extended. Clergy are therefore prohibited from traveling alone with or taking overnight trips alone with any unrelated minor and from sleeping in the same private space (e.g., room, tent, bed, etc.) with any unrelated minor.

d. All office, classroom and sacristy doors are to be installed or retrofitted with clear glass, and the glass is to remain uncovered at all times. Reconciliation rooms or chapels, while soundproof and allowing for the privacy of the penitent, are to have windows that

¹ Such employees and volunteers remain bound by their own school policies, diocesan Safe Environment policies, as well as all other provisions of this policy, including avoiding interaction alone with an unrelated minor in settings conducive to isolation.

remain uncovered. Unless a maintenance closet or room requires a solid door for reasons of safety, it is to be similarly fitted. Blind spots and isolated spaces in buildings and on the grounds of the facilities are to be minimized and monitored. (The property manager of the diocese may be consulted when making such arrangements.)

e. Administrators of diocesan offices, agencies, parishes, schools and other institutions are to see that places for counseling and direction possess open access. The Office for the Protection of Children and Youth should be consulted when making such arrangements.

f. Similarly, they are to conduct activities at appropriate times and never at times that would cause confusion or ambiguity about the nature of the relationship.

g. They are not to use electronic media of any kind (e.g., internet, social websites, webcams or personal electronic devices) in a way that would cause confusion or ambiguity about the nature of the relationship. (Also see [#4.6.1.2](#) Standards for the Use of Electronic Media.)

h. Counselors and spiritual directors are to maintain logs of the times and location of sessions, but any video or audio recording is prohibited, even with the consent of clients or directees.

i. Video recording of testimonials from clients, with their signed consent, is permitted.

j. Any personal notes that are taken in the course of ministerial conversations by a priest, deacon or parish minister, should be securely stored so that they remain inaccessible to all but the writer. They should be destroyed when they are no longer needed. Discretion should be taken in making such notes.

4. Extramarital sexual act(s) by those who provide some pastoral or other service of the Church, including teaching, counseling and spiritual direction, toward those who receive it, is absolutely forbidden in all cases, whether perceived to be consensual or not.

a. Forced physical contact as well as inappropriate, suggestive or harassing sexual comments or gestures is also absolutely forbidden.

b. The viewing, acquisition and transmission of pornography is gravely contrary to chastity and human dignity.^[2] It is to be considered absolutely prohibited. (Such actions with respect to child pornography are also a crime in civil law.)

5. They are not to counsel or take action that is contrary to the magisterial teaching of the Catholic Church, the universal law of the Church, or diocesan norms.

6. Unless a civil law regulating a profession is contrary to divine law, the law of the Church or these diocesan norms, it is to be observed when exercising that profession under the sponsorship of the diocese or its institutions. Unless it is contrary to divine law, the law of the Church or these diocesan norms, the professional code of ethics that applies to the provision of services by a member of that profession is to be similarly observed.

[1] See *Pontifical Council for the Family, The Family and Human Rights (December 9, 1999)*. Available at *Vatican website*. Also see, e.g., *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 1928 – 1938.

[2] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2354.

I hereby approve, with immediate effect, the *General Norms of Pastoral Conduct* as revised above, amending the previous norms which I approved on November 11, 2013.

Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Curia in Lansing on this the fourth day of November, the memorial of Saint Charles Borromeo, bishop, in the year of our Lord 2020.

Most Reverend Earl Boyea
Bishop of Lansing

Mr. Michael Andrews
Chancellor