



# Code of Conduct for Church Personnel in the Diocese of Arlington

August 2004

## GUIDELINES FOR A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Catholic Diocese of Arlington is committed to providing a safe environment for children within all activities and ministries of the diocese. Children are a most precious and gift and all the faithful cooperate in taking every reasonable action to ensure their safety. An important tool in creating safe environments for children is the code of conduct. This code lists behaviors and activities that are inappropriate for those who work with children. The purpose of this code is to make clear to employees and volunteers behaviors that are unacceptable and to allow proper monitoring of all youth activities.

These guidelines apply to all diocesan, parish and Catholic school activities in the Diocese of Arlington. For the purposes of this code “children,” “child,” “youth,” or “young person” is defined to mean any person less than 18 years of age. These guidelines do not apply to parents and foster parents and the children in their parental care.

### **A. General Guidelines for Behavior of all Adults with Children**

1. Only priests, seminarians, or their immediate family may be overnight guests in rectories. Only priests, seminarians and the individual’s immediate family members may be admitted to personal living spaces within rectories.
2. A child may never be offered alcoholic beverage, tobacco, drugs or anything else that is prohibited by law.

3. Planned, ongoing meetings with a child will not take place without the knowledge of a parent or guardian.
  - If one-on-one pastoral care of a minor should be necessary, avoid meeting in isolated environments. Schedule meetings at times and use locations that create accountability.
  - Adults should not be alone with a child in a sleeping facility, locker room, rest room, dressing facility, or other closed room or isolated area that is inappropriate to a ministry relationship.
  - Limit both the length and number of sessions, and make appropriate referrals.
4. Do not give significant gifts or grant special privileges or opportunities to a specific child. Small gifts are not to be given to children without the presumed permission or knowledge of a parent or guardian.
5. Unrelated children/young persons are not to be in any adults home without the presence of other responsible adults.
6. Do not use inappropriate conversation, vocabulary, recordings, films, or games with minors. Showing sexually explicit or pornographic material to a child or young person is illegal.
7. Do not take photographs of children/young people while they are unclothed or dressing. Do not take photographs of single or specific children without the knowledge of a parent or guardian.
8. Adults should not take an overnight trip alone with a child who is not a member of their immediate family without the written permission of a parent or guardian, the approval of the pastor or supervisor and must be accompanied by another responsible adult.
9. Touching another person should be age appropriate and show respect and kindness.
  - Wrestling, tickling and other acts of “horse-play” with a child shall always be avoided.
  - Physical contact when alone with a child should be avoided. Hugging can be an expression of love and respect. However, hugging should always be done in the presence of others and never while alone in a room behind closed doors

- If a child initiates physical contact, an appropriate, limited response is proper. In all cases it must be respectful.
10. If you become aware of an inappropriate personal or physical attraction between yourself and a young person, maintain clear professional boundaries between yourself and the young person and consult with a supervisor.
  11. Normally youths should not have keys to church facilities. If they need keys because of employment they should be carefully screened.
  12. Engaging in physical discipline of a child is prohibited.

### **B. Guidelines for Chaperones and Supervisors of Children at Group Activities**

1. Chaperones/supervisors are responsible for reviewing the Diocese of Arlington Code of Conduct and all related guidelines with the children assigned to them.
2. Two or more adults must be present for events involving children.
  - The recommended ratio for chaperones /supervisors to children is 1:10 for day trips and 1:7 for activities lasting more than 12 hours.
  - In the event a sufficient number of chaperones / supervisors are not available, the event will be cancelled.
  - Under no conditions will a person under 18 be used to satisfy the requirement for chaperone/supervisors.
3. If a person must go into a sleeping room with children, a second adult must be present with them. If a supervisor stays in a hotel or other sleeping room with children, the supervisor should sleep in his or her own bed using a rollaway or cot if necessary. Under no circumstances shall an unrelated adult share a bed with a child.
4. Facilities must be monitored during all organization activities.
5. Dress must always be in keeping with modesty and Christian values.
6. Parental permission must be obtained, including a signed medical treatment form, before taking children on trips. Do not administer medication of any kind without authorized written parental permission.

7. Adult participants are expected to refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages for the duration of the event or using tobacco in the presence of children as well as during their travels to and from the event.
8. The possession or use of illegal drugs is strictly prohibited.
9. Items designed as weapons are strictly prohibited.
10. If anyone is uncomfortable with the actions or intentions of another during the trip, it should be reported to the chaperone or supervisor immediately.
11. Both adults and youth are expected to attend activities with the entire group.
12. During all activities, especially a dance or other social event, chaperones will be available in the building where the activity takes place.
13. Groups of young people will be assigned a specific adult chaperone who will monitor and supervise their behavior throughout the event.
14. On any trip, information will be distributed to chaperones or supervisors for review with all participants to help familiarize them with the program schedule and layout of the facilities where event activities will take place.
  - Ensure that the young people understand important safety information.
  - An accountability system, similar to a “buddy system,” must be used whenever children go on trips.
  - A specific location must be designated where minors will be able to locate their chaperone or supervisor or where the group will meet at an agreed upon time.
  - During overnight activities, chaperones or supervisors are responsible for establishing a curfew and for enforcing it. Chaperones or supervisors must check rooms after curfew to make sure that young people are in their rooms and remain there.
  - Adults must not go anywhere during the event where the youth may not go with them. (e.g. cocktail lounges, bars, etc.)

All persons performing work, ministry or volunteer service within the Church in Arlington are expected to follow these guidelines. Violation of these guidelines will be considered a serious matter and be investigated and resolved. Remembering that those who work with children are serving as stewards of

God's precious gift of young life should reinforce the need always to respect boundaries and provide a holy example of life.

I have read and understand the guidelines contained in the Code of Conduct for the Diocese of Arlington. I intend to follow these guidelines and to monitor and protect children and young people in my service to the Church.

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Name (Please Print)

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Signature

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Date

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Parish/School/Organization