

OFFICE OF SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Diocesan Code of Conduct

The *Diocesan Code of Conduct* establishes general principles, ethical standards, and mandatory protocols for life and ministry by which we must abide. This *Code* does not presume to represent all situations that may arise. It serves as a framework for expected behavior and decision-making but acknowledges that unique or unforeseen circumstances may occur.

All individuals are expected to adhere to these standards with integrity, take responsibility for their actions, and ensure their behavior aligns with the principles outlined in this *Code*, thereby upholding the dignity and mission of the Diocese.

For the purposes of this *Code*:

A *vulnerable adult* is defined as an individual aged 18 or older who cannot make informed judgments due to cognitive impairments.

A *qualified adult* must be present or able to monitor the interaction visually, is defined as someone with valid and current Safe Environment credentials (having attended Safe Environment training and passed a criminal background check within the last five years.)

Unrelated adults exclude immediate family, which includes biological, adoptive, or stepfamily connections.

- Spouse or partner
- Parents
- Children
- Siblings
- In-laws
- Grandparents
- Grandchildren

Prohibited Conduct

While employed by or volunteering for any diocesan entity under the auspices of the Diocese of Syracuse, I understand that if I am arrested for crimes against children, young people, or vulnerable adults, my Safe Environment credentials will immediately be revoked. Crimes against children, young people, and vulnerable adults include, but are not limited to:

- Sexual abuse or exploitation of children, young people, or vulnerable adults.
- Production, advertisement, transportation, distribution, receipt, sale, access with intent to view, and possession of child sexual abuse material.
- Any felony involving violence against children, young people, or vulnerable adults.

Furthermore, my Safe Environment credentials will be immediately suspended pending review if:

- I use sexually explicit or suggestive language, comments, or jokes when speaking to or engaging with a child, young person, or vulnerable adult. This includes, but is not limited to, printed materials, photos or images sent electronically, recordings, videos/films, games, software, social media, email, or other forms of digital communication.

- I view or share sexually explicit or suggestive material, including pornography, with a child, young person, or vulnerable adult. This prohibition includes, but is not limited to, printed materials, photos or images sent electronically, recordings, videos/films, games, software, social media, email, or other digital communication.

Standards of Conduct

During my employment or volunteering for any diocesan entity under the auspices of the Diocese of Syracuse, I agree to uphold the following standards of conduct and maintain appropriate boundaries.

1. I will ensure that at least one other unrelated qualified adult is present and readily accessible when working or volunteering with children, young people, or vulnerable adults. This does not apply during the Sacrament of Penance (Confession).
2. I will ensure that offices, classrooms, or other venues where I meet with children, young people, or vulnerable adults, either one-on-one or in group settings, have visibility to a hallway or common area (e.g., a window or an open door) and are immediately accessible to other qualified adults.
3. I will avoid being alone with a child, young person, or vulnerable adult in bathrooms, shower facilities, locker rooms, or dressing rooms where it is necessary for their health or safety or if they have special needs requiring specific assistance.
4. I will ensure that at least three people are present in the vehicle when driving children, young people, or vulnerable adults to or from diocesan-related activities.
 - a. Two unrelated qualified adults and only one child or young person or vulnerable adult; or,
 - b. One qualified adult and two children, young people, or vulnerable adults.
5. I will refrain from making demeaning comments or jokes based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, or physical appearance.
6. I will not use any language or disciplinary actions that ridicule, threaten, degrade, frighten, or humiliate, including, but not limited to, yelling, bullying, using derogatory names, or intimidation.
7. I will refrain from using any form of physical discipline, force, retaliation, or correction, including, but not limited to, spanking, striking, shaking, pinching, or slapping.
8. I will ensure that all physical contact with children, young people, or vulnerable adults is public, appropriate, and non-sexual.

The term *protected person* will encompass children, young people, or vulnerable adults on the following list.

Appropriate physical contact with a protected person includes, but is not limited to:

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| • Short, quick hugs initiated by a protected person | • Arm around the shoulders |
| • Side hugs | • High fives & fist bumps |
| • Handshakes | • Holding hands during prayer |
| • Holding hands while walking small children | • Pats on the shoulder or back |

Inappropriate physical contact with a protected person includes, but is not limited, to:

- Front hugs last more than a second or two
- Unwelcome front hugs not initiated by a protected person
- Hugging from behind
- Giving or receiving shoulder or back massages
- Adults seeking out physical contact or affection from a protected person
- Sitting on a lap (whether a protected person on an adult's lap or an adult on a protected person's lap)
- Body slamming
- Swatting the buttocks
- Tickling
- Piggyback rides
- Kissing

9. I will refrain from commenting on the physique or body development of any child, young person, or vulnerable adult.

10. While in the presence of children, young people, or vulnerable adults under my care or responsibility, I will refrain from using, possessing, or being under the influence, nor will I provide or distribute the following,

- Alcohol (except for the distribution of the Precious Blood during Mass)
- Legal medications (unless prescribed by a licensed physician)
- Tobacco products
- Marijuana in any form
- Illegal drugs
- Vaping materials

11. I understand that items designed as weapons or that have the appearance of weapons are prohibited.

12. I will not give individual gifts to a child, young person, or vulnerable adult that are not intended for the entire group, except for awards.

13. I understand that prior written approval from the parent/guardian and the pastor/supervisor is required to provide necessities, such as clothes, food, gift cards, or cash, to any individual child, young person, or vulnerable adult.

14. I will not photograph or film children, young people, or vulnerable adults other than my own at diocesan-related events, including, but not limited to diocesan school or sporting events and youth activities, for my personal use or posting on my personal social networking sites.

15. I understand that all programs, groups, or activities involving children, young people, or vulnerable adults require prior approval from the parish, school, or agency administration.

Social Media

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

16. I will only communicate or interact with unrelated children, young people, or vulnerable adults through cell phones, telephones, or other social media and digital communications for the responsibilities of my role or ministry, never for personal or social reasons.

17. I understand that all communication with children, young people, and vulnerable adults, including social media and digital communication, must be professional and related to my specific role and responsibilities.

18. I understand that all correspondence, including social media and digital communication, must include copies sent to my supervisor/pastor and the minor's parent/guardian.
19. I will not connect with or 'friend' children, young people, or vulnerable adults on any social media platform, including, but not limited to, personal, parish, school, agency, and youth ministry accounts, whom I have met through my employment or volunteering for a diocesan entity.
20. I will not permit children, young people, or vulnerable adults whom I have met through my employment or volunteering for a diocesan entity to follow or 'friend' me on any social media platform, including, but not limited to, personal, parish, school, agency, and youth ministry accounts.
21. I will refrain from using messaging apps with children, young people, or vulnerable adults due to the inability to retain a record of communication (i.e., Facebook Messenger, Snapchat, WhatsApp).
22. I will communicate with minors only between 8:00 AM and 9:00 PM, unless it is an emergency or requires time-sensitive information.
23. I will not allow a child, young person, or vulnerable adult to use my electronic devices or access my social media or email accounts.

Reporting

I must promptly report any illegal activity by any individual (clergy, religious, diocesan/parish/agency employee, or diocesan/parish/agency volunteer) to the appropriate local civil authorities.

I must promptly report any concerning, suspicious, or unethical behaviors or communications by clergy, religious, diocesan/parish/agency employees, or diocesan/parish/agency volunteers that are contrary to this *Code of Conduct* to my pastor/supervisor and the diocesan Office of Safe Environment at 315.470.1421 or safeenvironment@syrdio.org.

I will cooperate with civil or diocesan investigations into any alleged incident.