STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR ADULTS WORKING WITH MINORS

INTRODUCTION

The following Policy is applicable to all persons employed by or volunteering in any of the parishes and institutions of the Archdiocese of San Francisco. This Policy has been developed to help create a safe, appropriate, and Christian environment for minors and their relationship with adults involved in Church ministry. These child-specific standards are designed to serve as a supplement to the sexual boundary guidelines/code of ethics applicable to all those involved in the ministry of the Catholic Church (whether with minors or adults) that are set forth in the Archdiocese of San Francisco's Policies and Procedures Regarding Child Abuse.

GUIDELINES WITH REGARD TO MINISTRY WITH MINORS

1. Any and all involvement with minors (i.e., individuals under the age of 18 and any person whose usual ability to reason is limited to that of a person younger than 18 years) is to be approached from the premise that minors should always be viewed – whether in a social or ministerial situation – as restricted individuals; that is, they are not independent. Wherever they are and whatever they do is to be with the explicit knowledge and consent of their parents and/or guardians. They are subject to specific civil laws in the State of California, which may prohibit certain activities. They are not adults and are not permitted unfettered decisions.

2. Whenever possible, (see Numbers 3, 4, 5 and 6 below) adults must avoid situations which will place them in a position to be alone with a minor in the rectory, school, or in a closed room. The only exception is the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Counselors should leave a door open to provide visual access while preventing inadvertent over-hearing of the conversation.

3. In meeting and/or pastoral counseling situations involving a minor, excluding the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the presence or proximity of another adult is encouraged. However, in those situations where the presence of another adult is not usual or practical (e.g., piano lessons, disciplinary meeting with an administrator, etc.), another adult should be informed that the meeting is taking place. The meeting place should be accessible and visible, with the door where the meeting is taking place left ajar, unless there is a clear window providing visual but not audio access.

4. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is to be celebrated in a place so designed for that purpose: reconciliation chapel or confessional, or in view (not hearing) of another adult.

5. An unaccompanied minor is allowed only in the professional section of the rectory (parish offices) or parish center, never in the living quarters. Minors age 16 and over are permitted to work in the rectory when there would normally be at least two adults present who are 21 years of age or older.

6. At least two adults are to be present when a group of minors engage in organized events or sports activities; save for unforeseen circumstances such as the sudden illness of a coach (though in such

cases attempts should be made to secure the presence of a compliant adult, e.g., a parent of one of the group members).

7. Adults are to avoid being the only adult in a bathroom, shower room, locker room, or other dressing area whenever minors are using such facilities.

8. Youth trips of any kind must have a minimum of two adult chaperones, at least one of whom is of the same sex as the young people. Larger groups must have a least one adult chaperone for every eight minors.

9. While on trips or program activities, the adults, as well as the minors, may not use alcohol or controlled substances. However, with the approval of the pastor or principal, modest alcohol consumption by adult workers and parents of children is acceptable at events such as end-of-season team parties, etc.

10. While on youth trips, clergy or lay leaders are never to stay alone overnight with a minor or minors, with the exception of a lay leader staying in the same room with his/her own child. Whenever possible, it is desirable that minors be in separate rooms by sex and that two adults of the same sex as the minors share that sleeping space.

11. The sacristy door is always to be open whenever minors are present within the sacristy.

12. Comments of a sexual nature are not to be made to any minor except in response to specific classroom or otherwise legitimate questions from a minor.

13. Topics or vocabulary, such as profanity, cursing, or vulgar humor, which could not comfortably be used in the presence of parish/school administrators, parents/guardians, or another adult, shall not be used in the presence of minors.

14. Adults are absolutely prohibited from serving or supplying alcohol, tobacco products, controlled substances, or pornographic or other inappropriate reading or visual materials to minors. The acquisition, possession, and distribution of child pornography is strictly prohibited.

15. Audiovisual, Internet, music, and printed resources used in programs must be screened prior to use to ensure their appropriateness for the participants. It is never appropriate to use an "R"-rated movie, or movies rated with an even stronger designation, save for use of Archdiocese-approved, age-appropriate films or film excerpts. Music lyrics should also be reviewed to ensure appropriateness.

16. Careful boundaries concerning physical contact with minors must be observed at all times and such contact should only occur under public circumstances. Prudent discretion and respect must be shown before touching another person in any way. An adult should not assume that a child is comfortable with an adult-initiated hug or embrace, and, in any event, special care should be taken to avoid incidental contact, unintended or otherwise, with or in the vicinity of a child's genital areas. If the child initiates physical contact, such as a hug, an appropriate limited response is proper.

17. Adults must refrain from giving regular and/or expensive gifts to children and young people without prior approval from the parents or guardians and the pastor or administrator.

18. It is never appropriate to impose "secrecy" on children and young people vis-à-vis their parents, police, etc. (e.g., under threat of physical harm, "punishment by God," etc.).

19. Clear violations of these standards, as well as any sexual misconduct, must be reported immediately to the appropriate parish, Archdiocesan and/or civil authorities in accordance with civil law and Archdiocesan policy.

GUIDELINES WITH REGARD TO PASTORAL COUNSELING

1. Pastoral counseling must take place only in the professional portion of a rectory or parish facility, never in the living quarters.
2. Offices or classrooms used for pastoral counseling must have a window in the door, or the door is to be left ajar during the counseling session.
3. Another adult must be in immediate proximity during any counseling session.
4. Unless the subject matter precludes their presence and/or knowledge, parents or guardians of minors should be made aware of the counseling session.
5. A referral for professional assistance is encouraged if counseling is expected to extend beyond two or three sessions with a minor. Evaluation of the situation should be made with the parents or guardians.
6. The counselor is responsible to recognize any personal/physical attraction to or from a client. In such a situation, the client should be immediately referred to another qualified adult or licensed professional.