
CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Pursuant to Illinois's Faith's Law requirements, the Diocese of Rockford adopts this Code of Professional Conduct for School Employees. Each of the provisions below is contained in existing policies and rules of the Diocese of Rockford, but are restated as a Code of Conduct for School Employees to comply with the law.

Each school is required pursuant to Faith's Law to post this Code of Professional Conduct for School Employees on the school's website and to publish this document in the school's parent/family/student handbook, if the school has one.

I. Educator Code of Conduct

Pursuant to recent Illinois law, the Diocese adopts the relevant portions of the Illinois Educator Code of Conduct, as follows, which applies to school employees who are certified or working toward certification or whose certification has been waived:

Principle 1: Responsibility to Students. Educators are committed to creating, promoting, and implementing a learning environment that enables students to achieve their highest academic potential, and to succeed as a responsible member of society. They are committed to embodying standards of professionalism in the learning environment; respecting the inherent dignity and worth of each student by assuring that the learning environment is characterized by respect for each student; maintaining a professional relationship with students at all times; providing a curriculum based on high expectations for students; and fostering in each student the development of attributes that will enhance skills and knowledge necessary to be a contributing member of society.

Principle 2: Responsibility to Self. Educators are committed to establishing high professional standards and striving to meet these standards through their performance. They are committed to assuming responsibility and accountability for their performance and striving to demonstrate proficiency and currency in both content knowledge and professional practice; developing and implementing personal and professional goals with attention to professional standards through a process of self-assessment and professional development; representing their professional credentials and qualifications accurately; and using sound professional judgment.

Principle 3: Responsibility to Colleagues and the Profession. Educators are committed to collaborating with school and Diocesan colleagues and other professionals in the interest of student learning and to meet state educational standards; working together to create a respectful, professional and supportive school climate for educators to maintain their individual professional integrity; seeking out and engaging in activities that contribute to the ongoing development of the profession; encouraging promising candidates to enter the education profession; and supporting the preparation, induction, mentoring and professional development of educators.

Principle 4: Responsibility to School Parents and Families. Educators are committed to collaborating, striving to build trust, and respecting confidentiality with school parents and families striving to develop and maintain professional relationships with school parents and

families; and promoting collaboration and supporting student learning through communication with parents and families.

Principle 5: Responsibility to the ISBE. Educators are committed to supporting the Administrative and School Codes as applicable to Catholic schools, state and federal laws and regulations as applicable to Catholic schools, and the Illinois State Board of Education's standards for highly qualified educators, as applicable to Catholic schools. They are committed to providing accurate communication to the Illinois State Board of Education concerning all certification matters; maintaining appropriate certification for employment; and complying with the state and federal codes, laws, and regulations, that apply to Catholic schools.

II. Sexual misconduct

The Diocese's *Norms for the Prohibition of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Sexual Misconduct with Adults: Education, Prevention, Assistance to Persons making a Report, Investigation, and Procedures for Determination of Fitness for Ministry/Employment*, prohibits sexual abuse of minors by its employees, clergy members, and volunteers. Pursuant to Faith's Law, the Diocese has amended its *Norms* to add additional description of acts constituting sexual abuse of a minor:

Sexual misconduct, defined by Faith's Law as any verbal, nonverbal, written, or electronic communication or physical activity directed toward or with a minor for the purpose of establishing a romantic or sexual relationship with the minor, including but not limited to a sexual or romantic invitation; dating or soliciting a date; engaging in sexualized or romantic dialog; making sexually suggestive comments that are directed toward or with a minor; self-disclosure or physical exposure of a sexual, romantic, or erotic nature; and/or a sexual, indecent, romantic, or erotic contact with the minor (Illinois' *Faith's Law*, Public Act 102-0676, (105 ILCS 5/22-85.5)).

Grooming behavior, defined by Faith's Law and the Illinois Criminal Code as knowingly using a computer online service, internet service, local bulletin board service, or any other device capable of electronic data storage or transmission, or performs an act in person or by conduct through a third party, or uses written communication to seduce, solicit, lure, or entice, or attempt to seduce, solicit, lure, or entice, a child, or another person believed by the person to be a child, to commit any sex offense as defined in Section 2 of the Sex Offender Registration Act, to distribute photographs depicting the sex organs of the child, or to otherwise engage in any unlawful sexual conduct with a child or with another person believed by the person to be a child.

III. Expectations of School Employees

The Diocese restates here the Diocese's expectations of all its employees, including employees who work at parish elementary schools and Diocesan high schools in the Diocese of Rockford:

School employees are expected to maintain professional relationships and boundaries, recognizing the age and the developmental levels of the students with whom they interact.

These expectations are set forth in detail in the following:

Diocese's Code for the Pastoral Use of Technology and Social Media;

Diocese's Code of Pastoral Conduct; the Diocese's Guidelines for Youth and Those Working

with Youth Employee, Volunteer, and Youth Participant General Guidelines and Boundaries Expectations;
Diocese's Norms for the Prohibition of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Sexual Misconduct with Adults: Education, Prevention, Assistance to Persons making a Report, Investigation, and Procedures for Determination of Fitness for Ministry/Employment;
Illinois DCFS Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status form;

and the following trainings:

Virtus Protecting God's Children;

Illinois DCFS's Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse: Training for Mandated Reporters; and
State of Illinois' Prohibition of Sexual Harassment training.

IV. School employees are mandated reporters

The Diocese restates here the Diocese's requirement that its employees, including employees who work at parish elementary schools and Diocesan high schools in the Diocese of Rockford, shall report suspected child abuse and suspected child neglect to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

Pursuant to the Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, (325 ILCS 5/4), school employees are required to make a report suspected child abuse and suspected child neglect to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services by calling the hotline number at 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873) whenever the employee has reasonable cause to believe that a child known to the employee in the employee's professional or official capacity may be abused or neglected.

This requirement is contained in the following:

Diocese's Norms for the Prohibition of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Sexual Misconduct with Adults: Education, Prevention, Assistance to Persons making a Report, Investigation, and Procedures for Determination of Fitness for Ministry/Employment;

Illinois DCFS Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status form;

and the following trainings:

Virtus Protecting God's Children;

Illinois DCFS's Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse: Training for Mandated Reporters; and
State of Illinois' Prohibition of Sexual Harassment training.

V. Employee training related to child abuse and educator ethics

The Diocese requires its employees be trained annually in their obligations as mandated reporters and every three years to be trained in preventing, detecting and responding properly to sexual harassment. The trainings are entitled DCFS's *Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse: Training for Mandated Reporters;* and the State of Illinois' *Prohibition of Sexual Harassment training.*

Those requirements are set forth in the Diocese's Employee Handbook and in the Diocese's *Safe Environment Requirements for Clergy, Adult/Teen Employees and Volunteers whose role involves direct contact with minors.*

The Diocese will require its school employee educators to receive training in educator ethics. When those resources are completed, they will be shared with educators.

References:

Diocese's Norms for the Prohibition of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Sexual Misconduct with Adults: Education, Prevention, Assistance to Persons making a Report, Investigation, and Procedures for Determination of Fitness for Ministry/Employment, Illinois DCFS Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status form;

Diocese's Code for the Pastoral Use of Technology and Social Media;

Diocese's Code of Pastoral Conduct, the Diocese's Guidelines for Youth and Those Working with Youth Employee, Volunteer, and Youth Participant General Guidelines and Boundaries Expectations;

and the following trainings:

Virtus Protecting God's Children;

Illinois DCFS's Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse: Training for Mandated Reporters; and State of Illinois' Prohibition of Sexual Harassment training.

Effective 7/1/2023