

*ARCHDIOCESE OF ATLANTA*



**SAFE ENVIRONMENT  
STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**



**Archdiocese of Atlanta**  
**SAFE ENVIRONMENT**



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# Updated Policy of the Archdiocese of Atlanta Concerning the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Individuals from Sexual Abuse by Church Personnel

## Introduction

The sexual abuse of Children and Vulnerable Individuals is reprehensible and tragic. It betrays the trust Children and Vulnerable Individuals naturally place in adults, especially those responsible for their instruction, welfare and guidance. The damage caused by sexual abuse is devastating and long lasting. It is even more tragic when its consequence is a loss of the faith that the Catholic Church has a sacred duty to foster. Sexual abuse of Children is “by every standard wrong and rightly considered a crime by society; it is also an appalling sin in the eyes of God” (Address by Pope John Paul II, to the Cardinals of United States and Conference Officers, April 23, 2002). Our obligation to protect Children and Vulnerable Individuals stems from the mission and example given to us by Jesus Christ himself, in whose name we serve. We want to be as transparent and forthcoming as possible regarding the policies and procedures used by the Archdiocese. Our goals as an Archdiocese are to: (1) provide a safe and secure environment for the Children and Vulnerable Individuals in the Archdiocese; (2) provide for a pastoral response to victims, their families, the accused person, and the community; and (3) reduce the damage done by false accusations against Church Personnel.

## Section 1. Definitions

The following words and phrases shall, for purposes of this Policy, have the following meanings:

- 1.1. Actionable. A determination by the Archbishop that an allegation is more likely than not true.
- 1.2. Administrative Leave. The status of an accused Church Personnel who has been relieved of assigned duties. The application of this term varies depending on the canonical status of the accused person and does not necessarily equate to the term as used in Canon Law.
- 1.3. Advisory Board. The board described in Section 8 of this Policy.
- 1.4. Archbishop. The canonically appointed Archbishop of Atlanta or the duly appointed Administrator in the event that, under Canon Law, the office of Archbishop is impeded or vacant. For purposes of this Policy, the Archbishop may act personally or through a designated representative.

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- 1.5. Child. Any person under the age of eighteen (18) years.
- 1.6. Church Personnel. Bishops, priests, deacons, religious, lay employees and lay volunteers involved in work for the Archdiocese.
- 1.7. Credible Allegation. An allegation, which offers reasonable grounds for being believed.
- 1.8. Sexual Abuse. Engaging in any of the following conduct with, or involving, a Child or Vulnerable Individual (i) by a person who at the time of the conduct was Church Personnel, or (ii) by an adult who later becomes Church Personnel in a case where the Child was more than five (5) years younger than the adult, or (iii) by a Child, who later becomes Church Personnel, in a case where the offending Child was at least fourteen (14) years old and more than five (5) years older than the other Child.
  - a. Conduct that constitutes child abuse, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation as defined in the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (“O.C.G.A.”) § 19-7-5(b)(10) or (b)(11), as those definitions may hereafter be amended or modified, provided, however, that for purposes of this Policy, Sexual Exploitation shall include the statutorily prohibited conduct involving any Church Personnel. (O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5(b)(10) and (b)(11), as they exist on the dates of this Policy, are attached as Appendix 1 to this Policy); or
  - b. Any conduct by Church Personnel about which he or she has previously been admonished or warned by the Archbishop in writing is improper conduct.
- 1.9. Volunteer. Any unpaid person involved in a ministry, activity or service under the authority of the Archdiocese.
- 1.10. Volunteer Who Has Regular Contact with Children. A Volunteer whose ministry, activity or service involves custodial responsibility for the care and supervision, or the reasonable anticipation of actual or potential unsupervised contact with a Child or Vulnerable Individual.
- 1.11. Vulnerable Individual. A Vulnerable Individual aged eighteen (18) years of age or older who, objectively viewed, is unable or unlikely to report abuse, without assistance, because of impairment of physical or mental function.

### **Section 2. Prohibited Conduct**

Sexual Abuse is reprehensible and tragic, and Sexual Abuse by Church Personnel will not be tolerated. While the priestly commitment to the virtue of chastity and the gift of celibacy is well known, all Church Personnel are required to observe appropriate boundaries and behavior which will avoid the occurrence of Sexual Abuse.

### **Section 3. Service Application Forms for Employees and Volunteers**

An application, in a form promulgated, or approved in writing, by the Archbishop (“Service Application”) must be completed by each applicant for any paid position in the Archdiocese and also by any Volunteer who has regular contact with Children. All

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completed "Service Applications" must be kept as part of the parish/agency/school personnel files.

- 3.1. Each applicant for any position in the Archdiocese and each Volunteer who has regular contact with Children must, as a condition of employment, ministry or service to the Archdiocese, consent to a "Background Check." The "Background Check" will be completed in accordance with the requirements of the "Background Investigation" consent form. The pastor or administrator shall be responsible for reviewing the information thus acquired to determine that there is nothing present which would indicate the person is unfit for the employment, ministry or service for which he or she has applied.
- 3.2. A copy of the "Service Application," including the "Background Check," and other forms on file shall be sent to the Archdiocesan Human Resources Office for the Archdiocese. Upon termination of employment, ministry or service, a copy of the complete parish/agency/school personnel file is to be sent to the Archdiocesan Human Resources Office.

### **Section 4. Service Application Forms for Clergy and Religious**

- 4.1 All superiors of religious institutes or orders proposing individuals for ministry or residence in Archdiocesan parishes or institutions, as well as those simply requesting priestly faculties in the Archdiocese, are required to state clearly in writing that there is no known history which would render the individual being proposed unsuitable to work with a Child or a Vulnerable Individual, including, but not limited to, any past allegation of Sexual Abuse or other misconduct of a sexual nature. This may be done through the use of form "Statement of the Religious Superior."
- 4.2 Clergy, religious or seminarians seeking assignment to perform ministry within the Archdiocese of Atlanta must, before beginning the assignment, have on file with the Archdiocese the "Application by a priest for service in the Archdiocese of Atlanta."
- 4.3 Clergy, religious or seminarians seeking assignment to perform ministry for six (6) consecutive days or more must complete the form, "Application for Assignment," and as a condition of assignment must consent to a "Background Check," which will be performed by the Archdiocese, before such assignment is made.
- 4.4 No pastor, parochial vicar, religious or director of any Archdiocesan institution or facility is permitted to grant residence, or full-time, part-time or regular weekend ministry to any priest, religious or layperson without prior approval from the Archbishop.

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- 4.5 Before any clergy or religious is proposed to another diocese for assignment, transfer, or residence, the Archbishop will make notification, similar in nature to the "Statement of Religious Superior," to the local ordinary of the new residence.

### **Section 5. Reporting Requirements**

- 5.1 Any Church Personnel who has reasonable cause to believe that Sexual Abuse has occurred and who has mandatory reporting requirements under federal, state or local law, including, but not limited to, O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5 shall report, or cause a report of that abuse to be made as required by law, an oral report shall be made immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused, by telephone or otherwise and followed by a report in writing, if requested, to a child welfare agency providing protective services, as designated by the Department of Human Services, or, in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority or district attorney. A copy of that report shall be sent immediately and confidentially to the Archbishop, or one of the Vicars General, or, in their absence the Director of the Safe Environment Office of the Archdiocese, who, in turn, will advise the Archbishop. The Archbishop will provide a copy of the report to the Advisory Board if it involves clergy or Religious. The Secretary of Human Resources will be provided a copy of the report if it involves lay employees or volunteers.
- 5.2 Church Personnel who are not required to report Sexual Abuse pursuant to Paragraph 5.1 of this Policy, but who have reasonable cause to believe that Sexual Abuse has occurred shall immediately confidentially report the information to the Archbishop, or one of the Vicars General, or, in their absence, to the Director of the Safe Environment Office of the Archdiocese, unless to do so would violate the priest-penitent relationship of the Sacrament of Penance. The Archbishop will assign a person to investigate the allegations and will provide a summary to the Advisory Board if it involves clergy or Religious. The Secretary of Human Resources will be provided a copy of the report if it involves lay employees or volunteers.
- 5.3 Each reported incident of alleged Sexual Abuse shall be investigated immediately by the Archbishop or his designated representative, in cooperation with any state or federal criminal investigation, with a high degree of pastoral care for the alleged victim and his or her family, the person reporting the incident, the accused person and all other persons whose lives reasonably can be expected by the Archbishop to be affected significantly by the alleged incident.

In the event a report received by the Archbishop presents a Credible Allegation of Sexual Abuse, the Archbishop or his designated representative shall in turn report the information to the appropriate government authorities as provided by O.C.G.A. § 19-

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- 5.4 7-5(Whether or not a report received by the Archbishop presents a Credible Allegation in the opinion of the Archbishop, a copy of the report shall be sent to the Advisory Board if it involves clergy or Religious. The Secretary of Human Resources will be provided a copy of the report if it involves lay employees or volunteers.
- 5.5 Without limiting the provisions of Subsections 5.1 through 5.4 of this Policy, it is the policy of the Archdiocese to comply with all applicable civil laws with respect to the reporting of allegations of sexual abuse of minors to civil authorities and to advise and support a person's right to make a report to public authorities.

### **Section 6. When Allegations are Made Against a Lay Employee or Volunteer**

- 6.1 When any allegation of Sexual Abuse with respect to an Archdiocesan lay employee or Volunteer is reported to the Archbishop, the Archbishop shall immediately notify the Secretary of Human Resources of the person(s) alleged to be involved, and the substance of the allegations.
- 6.2 Immediately after receipt of an allegation of Sexual Abuse with respect to a lay employee or Volunteer, the Archbishop shall cause a preliminary investigation to be undertaken in accordance with Archdiocesan employment policies and may undertake such additional or independent investigation, as he deems necessary. Based on the results of preliminary investigations the Archbishop shall make a determination as to the credibility of the allegations and he or his designee shall communicate his determination in a timely manner to the victim or the victim's representative and the accused person.
- 6.3 If the Archbishop determines that an allegation of Sexual Abuse involving a lay employee or Volunteer is a Credible Allegation, then in addition to any action taken pursuant to Archdiocesan employment policies, the accused person shall be:
- i. Notified in a timely manner of the nature of the allegation;*
  - ii. Placed on administrative leave pending the completion of the Archdiocesan investigation; and*
  - iii. Directed to remain away from any school, parish office, parish facility, agency, and other location, which is the subject of the complaint until the Archbishop has determined whether the allegation is Actionable.*
- 6.4 The Archbishop may request that the Secretary of Human Resources advise him in making his determination as to whether an allegation is Actionable. If a lay employee or Volunteer admits that he or she has engaged in Sexual Abuse, does not contest Credible Allegations of Sexual Abuse, or there is a determination by the Archbishop that an allegation of Sexual Abuse is Actionable, sanctions will be imposed in accordance with any applicable provisions of Canon Law, the regular employment policies of the Archdiocese as amplified by this Policy, and Section 12 of this Policy.

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The Archbishop or his designee shall communicate his determination as to whether the allegation is Actionable to the victim or the victim's designated representative, the accused person, and others required to be notified pursuant to Archdiocesan employment policies.

- 6.5 In instances where an allegation of Sexual Abuse is determined not to be Actionable, the Archbishop will make a determination as to whether the accused person is to be restored to duty and/or whether in his or her former position. The Archbishop may request the advice of the Secretary of Human Resources in making that determination. The Archbishop shall communicate his final determination as to restoration of duties to the alleged victim or the victim's designated representative and the accused person.
- 6.6 When an allegation is determined by the Archbishop not to be Actionable, the Archdiocese will make good faith efforts to restore the ministerial reputation and status of the accused person.
- 6.7 In response to a Credible Allegation of Sexual Abuse involving a lay employee or Volunteer, the Archbishop will take reasonable action to provide the family of the victim with appropriate spiritual care and pastoral support. Such care and support will be coordinated through the Office of Child and Youth Protection (formerly known as Project Aware). Any pastor-priest or other person designated by the Archbishop to assist in this pastoral process should avoid being concerned with the validity of the allegations. His or her function is strictly pastoral in nature without regard to the truth of any allegation or to the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident. The person who reported the alleged Sexual Abuse shall also be given appropriate pastoral care.
- 6.8 6.8 In all instances of alleged Sexual Abuse by a lay employee or Volunteer, reasonable care will be taken to protect the rights of all parties involved, particularly those of the person claiming to have been Sexually Abused and the person against whom the charge has been made. It is the responsibility of any lay employee or Volunteer who is accused of Sexual Abuse to obtain his or her own personal legal representation.

### **Section 7. When Allegations are Made Against Clergy or Religious in Service to the Archdiocese or Residing in an Archdiocesan Rectory, Convent or Facility**

- 7.1 When any allegation of Sexual Abuse with respect to Archdiocesan clergy, or any other clergy or religious within the Archdiocese, is reported to the Archbishop, the Archbishop shall notify the Advisory Board of the person(s) alleged to be involved and the substance of the allegations.
- 7.2 Immediately after receipt of an allegation of Sexual Abuse involving a member of the clergy or religious the Archbishop shall undertake a preliminary investigation of the allegation, which investigation will be initiated and conducted in harmony with



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Canon Law. Based upon the results of his investigation, the Archbishop shall make a determination as to the credibility of the allegations, and communicate his determination in a timely manner to the victim or the victim's representative, the accused person, and the Advisory Board. The Archbishop may request that the Advisory Board advise him in making his determination as to whether an allegation is a Credible Allegation.

- 7.3 If the Archbishop determines that an allegation of Sexual Abuse that has been made against a member of the clergy or religious is a Credible Allegation, the accused person shall be:
- i. Notified in a timely manner of the nature of the allegations;*
  - ii. Immediately relieved of his or her active ministerial duties pending the outcome of the Archbishop's investigation; and*
  - iii. Directed to remain away from any school, parish office, parish facility, agency, and other location, which is the subject of the complaint until the Archbishop has determined whether the allegation is Actionable.*
- 7.4 The Archbishop may request that the Advisory Board advise him in making his determination as to whether an allegation is Actionable. If a member of the clergy or religious admits that he or she has engaged in Sexual Abuse, does not contest Credible Allegations of Sexual Abuse against him or her, or if there is a determination by the Archbishop after an appropriate process in accord with Canon Law that an allegation of Sexual Abuse is Actionable, sanctions will be imposed in accordance with Section 12 of this Policy. If an allegation is determined by the Archbishop to be a Credible Allegation or Actionable, the Archbishop shall consult with the Advisory Board in making an assessment of the accused person's fitness for ministry. The Archbishop shall communicate his final determination as to whether the allegation is Actionable, and the sanctions imposed, in writing to the victim or the victim's designated representative, the accused person, and the Advisory Board.
- 7.5 As provided in Subsection 12.5 of this Policy, in every case involving allegations of Sexual Abuse against clergy or religious, the processes as provided for in and the various provisions of Canon Law will be observed and in the event of an irreconcilable conflict between the applicable provision of Canon Law and this Policy, the provisions of Canon Law will prevail. This may include a request by a priest or deacon for dispensation from the obligation of holy orders, or by the bishop proceeding to seek dismissal from the clerical state even without the consent of the priest or deacon. In accordance with due process, the accused person will be encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel. When necessary, the Archdiocese will provide canonical counsel to any accused priest or deacon.
- 7.6 Where an allegation of Sexual Abuse by a member of the clergy or religious is not admitted or it is determined by the Archbishop after an appropriate investigation not to be Actionable and the Archbishop has not determined that the accused person is unfit for ministry, the Archdiocese will make reasonable efforts to restore the ministerial reputation and status of the priest, deacon or religious.

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- 7.7 If the Archbishop determines that an allegation of Sexual Abuse, which has been made with respect to a member of the clergy or religious from a diocese or congregation other than the Archdiocese of Atlanta is Actionable, the Archbishop will immediately notify the appropriate superior of the actions, which have been taken and will be taken by the Archdiocese.
- 7.8 In response to a Credible Allegation of Sexual Abuse involving a member of the clergy or religious, the Archbishop will take reasonable action to provide the family of the alleged victim with appropriate spiritual care and pastoral support. Such care and support will be coordinated through the Office of Child and Youth Protection. Any pastor/priest or other person designated by the Archbishop to assist in this pastoral process should avoid being concerned with the validity of the allegations. His or her function is strictly pastoral in nature without regard to the truth of any allegation or to the circumstances surrounding any alleged incident. The person who reported the alleged Sexual Abuse shall also be given appropriate pastoral care.
- 7.9 In all instances, care will be taken to protect the rights of all parties involved, particularly those of the person claiming to have been a victim of Sexual Abuse and the person against whom the allegation has been made.

### **Section 8. Advisory Board**

- 8.1 The Advisory Board shall consist of at least five (5) persons of outstanding integrity and good judgment, in full communion with the Church. The majority of the Board shall be laypersons not in the employ of the Archdiocese, at least one of whom shall have particular expertise in the treatment of the sexual abuse of minors. One member of the Board shall be an experienced and respected pastor of the Archdiocese. The members of the Advisory Board, in their role as board members, are not acting as experts in psychology, law, Sexual Abuse, or any other area. They will rely upon information provided to them by the Archdiocese and independent sources, and have no duty of independent verification. The role of the Advisory Board is to provide the Archbishop with advice and counsel pursuant to this Policy.
- 8.2 The Board is a confidential consultative body to the Archbishop, and in such capacity shall:
- i. Serve in an advisory capacity to the Archbishop in assessing allegations of Sexual Abuse involving members of the clergy or religious as set forth in Section 7.*
  - ii. Advise the Archbishop, in a confidential manner, when requested, on the fitness for ministry of clergy or Religious alleged to be or to have been involved in Sexual Abuse and/or further steps to take with clergy or Religious with regard to fitness for continued ministry;*
  - iii. Review Archdiocesan policies and procedures and guidelines that may be established by various Archdiocesan departments for dealing with allegations of Sexual Abuse by clergy or other Church Personnel in order to recommend to the Archbishop any modifications in those policies and procedures, if appropriate.*

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- 8.3 The Board is advisory to the Archbishop and shall report to him in writing of its recommendations. If the Archbishop requests the advice of the Advisory Board, the Archbishop shall provide all pertinent evidence relating to the alleged Sexual Abuse to the Advisory Board. If any recommendation from the Advisory Board is not unanimous from the members of the Board, a minority report shall also be made in writing.
- 8.4 The members of the Advisory Board shall be chosen by the Archbishop. With regard to the lay members of the Board, conflicts of interest, either actual or implied, shall be avoided. Each member of the Advisory Board serves at the pleasure of the Archbishop. Each member will be appointed for a term of five (5) years, which can be renewed.
- 8.5 The Advisory Board may adopt such policies and procedures as may be necessary to conduct its duties as are consistent with the provisions and intent of this Policy.

### **Section 9. Archdiocesan Offices of Child and Youth Protection**

The goal of the Child and Youth Protection is to protect children and vulnerable individuals from sexual abuse and provide a safe environment in the Archdiocese of Atlanta. The Office of Child and Youth Protection is divided into two separate offices: The Office of Safe Environment and The Office of Victim Assistance. Each office has a different purpose, as described below.

- 9.1 The Archdiocesan Office of Victim Assistance shall aid in the immediate pastoral care of persons who claim to have been a victim of Sexual Abuse by Church Personnel. In addition, the office will ensure that the family of the alleged victim will receive appropriate spiritual care and pastoral support.
- 9.2 The Office of Victim Assistance will be headed by a coordinator. This individual, at the direction and instruction of the Archbishop, will coordinate and monitor the spiritual care and pastoral support supplied to alleged victims and to the family members of alleged victims of Sexual Abuse including but not limited to, counseling, spiritual assistance, support groups, or other social services agreed upon by the alleged victim and the Archdiocese.
- 9.3 The Office of Safe Environment will, at the direction and instruction of the Archbishop, assist the Archdiocese in establishing and maintaining "safe environment programs." The office will cooperate with parents, civil authorities, educators and community organizations to provide education and training for children, parents, pastors and ministers, educators and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for Children.

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## **Section 10. Complaints – Cooperation with Authorities**

- 10.1 The Archbishop shall adopt procedures for making complaints or allegations of Sexual Abuse involving Church Personnel. The procedures shall be made readily available in printed form and will be the subject of periodic public announcements regarding those procedures.
- 10.2 The Archdiocese shall cooperate with authorized state and federal civil and criminal authorities in their investigation of allegations of sexual abuse of minors involving Church Personnel.

## **Section 11. Media and Communications**

- 11.1
  - a) The Archdiocese is committed to openness and transparency in its dealings with the community, especially with the parish communities and other constituent communities of the Archdiocese which may be directly affected by ministerial misconduct involving minors and will meet this commitment to the extent possible while also respecting the privacy and reputations of individuals involved.
  - b) The Communications office is responsible for all media contacts; therefore, all media inquiries regarding this Policy, alleged Sexual Abuse involving Church Personnel, and related matters which are made to schools, parishes, or agencies of the Archdiocese should be referred to the Communications office, which will consult with, guide and coordinate relevant persons in the handling of subsequent media inquires and responses.
- 11.2 The Archdiocese will not enter into confidentiality agreements with respect to alleged Sexual Abuse, except in cases where confidentiality is requested by a victim or survivor of such Sexual Abuse for grave and substantial reasons proffered by the victim or survivor, which reasons are noted in the text of the confidentiality agreement.

## **Section 12. Sanctions**

- 12.1 Where Sexual Abuse by a lay employee or Volunteer is admitted or an allegation of Sexual Abuse is determined by the Archbishop to be Actionable, the accused person shall be immediately terminated as a Church Personnel.
- 12.2 (a) Where Sexual Abuse by a member of the clergy or religious is admitted, or an allegation of Sexual Abuse is determined by the Archbishop to be Actionable after an appropriate process in accord with Canon Law:

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- i. The accused person shall be permanently removed from active ministry and will not receive a future assignment;*
- ii. The accused person shall not be transferred for ministerial assignment;*
- iii. Under no circumstances shall the accused person ever be allowed to minister in the Archdiocese of Atlanta; and*
- iv. If the penalty of dismissal from the clerical state has not been applied (e.g., for reasons of advanced age or infirmity), the accused person shall be required to lead a life of prayer and penance; and if he is a member of the clergy, he will not be permitted to celebrate Mass publicly, to wear clerical garb, or to present himself publicly as a member of the clergy.*

(b) It is the intent of this Policy that after there has been a determination of even a single Actionable occurrence of Sexual Abuse, the accused member of the clergy or religious will not remain in active ministry and will not receive a future assignment.

12.3 (a) If the accused person is an Archdiocesan clergy or religious and a determination is made that an allegation of Sexual Abuse is Actionable or that the accused person is unfit for ministry, the Archbishop may refer him to a facility for comprehensive medical and psychological evaluations and intervention, if possible, so long as this does not interfere with any investigation by state or federal civil and criminal authorities. If the accused person refuses such referral, the Archbishop shall take appropriate steps in accordance with Canon Law to enforce his decision.

(b) If the accused person is a religious and the Archbishop determines that the allegation is Actionable, a decision as to rehabilitation will be made by his or her religious superior.

12.4 The Archbishop shall consult with the Advisory Board with respect to the imposition of sanctions and remedial actions under this Section 12 if the accused person is clergy or Religious.

12.5 In every case involving clergy and religious who are subject to Canon Law, the processes and sanctions as provided for in Canon Law will be observed and in the event of an irreconcilable conflict between the applicable provision of Canon Law and this Policy, the provisions of Canon Law will prevail. The necessary observance of canonical norms internal to the Church is not intended to hinder the course of any civil or criminal action.

12.6 Clergy, staff or volunteers who fail to comply with the provisions of this policy will be subject to actions by the Archdiocese as may be deemed necessary up to and including termination from any positions with the Archdiocese and/or with any parish, mission or other Catholic institutions and organizations which are subject to the administration, authority or governance of the Archdiocese in accordance with civil, criminal and Canon Law. Applicants for positions with the Archdiocese who fail to comply with the provisions of this policy, as applicable, will be denied such positions.

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## **Appendix 1**

Child Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation are defined in Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.) Section 19-7-5 as follows:

### **Child Abuse**

- (A) Physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by a parent or caretaker thereof by other than accidental means; provided, however, that physical forms of discipline may be used as long as there is no physical injury to the child;
- (B) Neglect or exploitation of a child by a parent or caretaker thereof;
- (C) Sexual abuse of a child; or
- (D) Sexual exploitation of a child

### **Sexual Abuse**

- (A) "Sexual abuse" means a person's employing, using, persuading, inducing, enticing, or coercing any minor who is not that person's spouse to engage in any act, which involves:
- (B) Sexual intercourse, including genital-genital, oral-genital, anal-genital, or oral-anal, whether between persons of the same or opposite sex;
- (C) Bestiality;
- (D) Masturbation;
- (E) Lewd exhibition of the genitals or pubic area of any person;
- (F) Flagellation or torture by or upon a person who is nude;
- (G) Condition of being fettered, bound, or otherwise physically restrained on the part of a person who is nude;
- (H) Physical contact in an act of apparent sexual stimulation or gratification with any person's clothed or unclothed genitals, pubic area, or buttocks or with a female's clothed or unclothed breasts;
- (I) Defecation or urination for the purpose of sexual stimulation; or
- (J) Penetration of the vagina or rectum by any object except when done as part of a recognized medical procedure.

As is the case in O.C.G.A. Section 19-7-5, "Sexual Abuse" does not include consensual sex acts involving persons of the opposite sex when the sex acts are between minors or between a minor and an adult who is not more than five years older than the minor.

### **Sexual Exploitation**

"Sexual exploitation" means conduct by any person who allows, permits, encourages, or requires that child to engage in:

- (A) Prostitution, as defined in O.C.G.A. Section 16-6-9 or
- (B) Sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing any visual or print medium depicting such conduct, as defined in O.C.G.A. Section 16-12-1 00.

## **Code of Conduct – Church Personnel**

### **Preamble**

The Archdiocese of Atlanta holds every person associated with the Archdiocese in any official capacity accountable for maintaining the integrity of all ministerial and professional relationships. The purpose of this Code of Conduct (“Code”) is to set forth the basic principles and guidelines. A comprehensive list of specific acts constituting a violation of this Code would be impossible. In addition to strict compliance with legal requirements, Church Personnel in the Archdiocese of Atlanta are expected to be guided by the basic principles of the Catechism of the Catholic Church in the conduct of Archdiocesan affairs and to comply with all Archdiocesan policies including never engaging in any act which constitutes Sexual Abuse of a minor (“Sexual Abuse”) as defined in the Archdiocese’s Policy regarding Sexual Abuse of Minors, as amended from time to time (“Sexual Abuse Policy”) and the guidelines contained in this Code. No Church Personnel may engage in any activity within or outside of the conduct of their ministry which might affect the Archdiocese or the members of the Catholic community which would violate any applicable law or the standards set out in this Code or which constitutes Sexual Abuse.

Common sense must be followed. However, the following Code is provided for the purpose of explicitly drawing attention to the special care, which must be taken in ministering to minors or other vulnerable individuals. Archdiocesan clergy, Religious, seminarians, personnel and volunteers must avoid contact with minors or vulnerable individuals that might be misconstrued by reasonable people or lead to misunderstandings. Given the consequences of sexual misconduct, clergy, Religious, seminarians, employees and volunteers should exercise caution and common sense to avoid situations which potentially might be misconstrued and to preclude any occasion that could give scandal or cause injury, whether that injury is intended or not by the individual.

### **Application of Code**

The Archdiocese expects you to conduct yourself according to this Code and to support others in doing so.

If you do not comply with this Code or if you permit a member of Church Personnel under your supervision to fail to comply with this Code, you are not meeting your responsibilities and you will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or ministry if you are an employee or lay volunteer, and action under canon law if you are a member of the clergy or Religious.

Supervisors are responsible for communicating the expectations contained in this Code, the “Ministerial Standards,” and the Sexual Abuse Policy to all Church Personnel under their leadership.

## **Code of Conduct – Church Personnel**

This Code, the “Ministerial Standards” and the “Procedures for Processing Allegations” are established as mechanisms for reporting and addressing noncompliance and for routinely assessing our operations and activities to ensure compliance with this Code and the Sexual Abuse Policy, other Archdiocesan policies and the law.

If you know about or suspect non-compliance with this Code, Ministerial Standards, or Sexual Abuse you are expected to report the non-compliance in accordance with the provisions of the “Procedures for Processing Allegations” adopted pursuant to the Sexual Abuse Policy. Any retaliation or threatened retaliation against you for reporting, in good faith, such actual or suspected non-compliance will be considered a serious violation of this Code, resulting in appropriate disciplinary action for anyone who retaliates against you, up to and including termination of employment or ministry and/or action under canon law.

If you have questions about any of the provisions or the application of this Code, the “Ministerial Standards” or the Sexual Abuse Policy, you should contact the Office of Safe Environment at 404-920-7550.

The following specific guidelines are to assist you with meeting the standards of conduct set out in this Code and the “Ministerial Standards” and to avoid allegations of Sexual Abuse. Although they are not exhaustive, they are intended to provide guidance and direction with respect to issues that may arise in the course of your day-to-day work.

### **Implementation and Accountability**

#### **1. Compliance with Policies**

In the Archdiocese of Atlanta, compliance with Archdiocesan policies is part of everyone’s job, although ultimate responsibility for adherence to this Code rests with the individual. In order to repair scandal, restore justice and reform offenders, appropriate action will be taken when any Church Personnel disregards or fails to comply with the expectations and behaviors defined in this Code. As a condition of your employment and/or ministry in the Archdiocese of Atlanta, you must be familiar and comply with this Code, the Sexual Abuse Policy, the “Ministerial Standards,” and all other Archdiocesan policies that apply to you. Violations of this Code, the “Ministerial Standards,” or any other Archdiocesan policy are grounds for disciplinary action and possible legal prosecution. This Code provides you with guidance about the Archdiocese’s expectations in regard to your conduct and basic legal responsibilities as Church Personnel of the Archdiocese. There are some standards specific to one’s ministry, which are more precise



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than the Code of Conduct. In instances where guidelines conflict between the “Ministerial Standards” and the Code of Conduct, the “Ministerial Standards” are to be followed.

### 2. Compliance with the Law

Compliance with laws and regulations that apply to the Archdiocese is an absolute minimum requirement to maintaining our Catholic values and standard of conduct. While we are called to a higher standard, this minimum requirement means that each of us is responsible for understanding the laws that apply. Violating the law can seriously damage the Archdiocese’s reputation, subject the Archdiocese to liability and subject you to personal civil or criminal liability. The Archdiocese’s leadership will support you in meeting your responsibility to comply with the law and will provide you with the resources necessary for compliance. Questions concerning any legal responsibility should be referred to the Office of Safe Environment at 404-920-7550.

### 3. “Am I My Brother’s Keeper?” Pledge To Report Abuse of Minors

#### Who Is A Mandatory Reporter?

Mandatory reporters are legally required to report allegations and suspicions of child abuse. Failure to report can result in legal action. Mandatory reporters include:

- Physicians licensed to practice medicine; interns; residents; hospital or medical personnel; dentists; podiatrists; registered professional nurses, licensed practical nurses; or nurse’s aides
- School teachers; school administrators; school guidance counselors, visiting teachers, school social workers, or school psychologists
- Licensed psychologists; persons participating in internships to obtain licensing as psychologists; professional counselors, social workers, or marriage and family therapists; child-counseling personnel
- Child welfare agency personnel (including any child-caring institution, child-placing agency, maternity home, family day-care home, group day-care home, and day-care center);
- Child service organization personnel (see below for definition)
- Law enforcement personnel
- Persons who process or produce visual or printed matter
- Reproductive health care facility or pregnancy resource center personnel and volunteers;

*Ga. Code Ann. §§ 19-7-5(c)(1)*

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The new law defines “child service organization personnel” as follows:

‘Child service organization personnel’ means persons employed by or volunteering at a business or an organization, whether public, private, for profit, not for profit, or voluntary, that provides care, treatment, education, training, supervision, coaching, counseling, recreational programs, or shelter to children. *Ga. Code Ann. §§ 19-7-5(b)(5)*

This includes all priest, all deacons, all seminarians, all religious sisters and brothers, all staff, and all volunteers serving within the Archdiocese of Atlanta.

### Mandatory Reporters

If you are a mandatory reporter and have reasonable cause to believe that child abuse has occurred, you must immediately report this information but in no case later than **24 hours** from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused. An oral report shall be made immediately to the Department of Family and Children Services (DFACS) or the appropriate child welfare agency as per the law. If requested, a written report should be provided as well. You must complete all of the following steps:

**PLEASE REMEMBER: Your Role is to Report. There is to be no investigation by you or anyone else at the parish, mission, school, or archdiocesan level.**

1. If the alleged/suspected victim is a minor, call the Division of Family and children Services, DFCS, (**immediately but no later than 24 hours**) or in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority or district attorney.
  - a) A list of DFCS contact numbers can be found at <http://www.archatl.com/offices/ocyp/report/dfcs.html> or through the DFCS webpage at <http://dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/county-offices> or call them at 1-855-GACHILD (if you print a copy of DFCS numbers from their webpage, please update the hard copy regularly since DFCS updates the information frequently) Be prepared to give the child’s name, address, age, the nature of the suspected abuse, the name of the suspected perpetrator, and his/her relationship to the child.
  - b) Follow-up with a letter to DFCS. You may contact the Safe Environment office for assistance via email or phone at [pfreed@archatl.com](mailto:pfreed@archatl.com) or 404-920-7550
2. Call the Office of the District Attorney (immediately but no later than 24 hours). (**only if it involves Church Personnel**)
  - a) A list of District Attorney office contact numbers can be found at <http://www.pacga.org/site/fyp>
  - b) Be prepared to give them the suspected victim’s name, address, age, the nature of the suspected abuse, the name of the suspected perpetrator, and his/her relationship to the suspected victim.

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- c) Follow-up with a letter to the District Attorney’s Office. You may contact the Safe Environment office for assistance via email or phone at [pfreed@archatl.com](mailto:pfreed@archatl.com) or 404-920-7550
3. If the alleged abuse involves church personnel (priests, deacons, seminarians, Religious sisters or brothers, teachers, employees or volunteers) do all of the following after contacting DFCS and the District Attorney’s Office:
  - a. Call the Archdiocese of Atlanta within 24 hours of getting the information. Please complete the following steps:
    - i. Call 1-888-437-0764 (24 hours a day) to file a report or
    - ii. Call the Archbishop’s Office at 404-920-7315 or 404-920-7550 so that the Archdiocese of Atlanta can be an active participant in cooperating with the appropriate state and local authorities. The report to the Archdiocese is NOT in lieu of the report to the appropriate state and local authorities.

### Clergy

A member of the clergy is deemed to be a Mandatory Reporters. A priest shall not be required to report child abuse reported solely within the context of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When a priest receives information about child abuse from any other source, the priest shall comply with the reporting requirements specified above.

### Non-Mandatory Reporters

If you are a non-mandatory reporter and have reasonable cause to believe that sexual abuse has occurred, you must immediately report the information to the Archdiocese.

**PLEASE REMEMBER: Your Role is to Report. There is to be no investigation by you or anyone else at the parish, mission, school, or archdiocesan level.**

If the alleged abuse involves archdiocesan personnel (priests, deacons, seminarians, Religious sisters or brothers, teachers, employees or volunteers) do all of the following:

1. Call the Archdiocese of Atlanta immediately but no later than **24** hours of getting the information.
  - i. Call 1-888-437-0764 (24 hours a day) to file a report.
  - ii. Call the Archbishop’s Office at 404-920-7315 or 404-920-7550 so that the Archdiocese of Atlanta can be an active participant in cooperating with the appropriate state and local government authorities. The report to the Archdiocese is NOT in lieu of the report to state and local government authorities.

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As a non-mandatory reporter, you are not legally required to, but you may also do the following after reporting to the Archdiocese:

1. If the person about whom you are calling is a minor, call DFCS in the county where the minor lives or in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority or district attorney.
  - i. A list of DFCS contact numbers can be found at the DFCS webpage at <http://dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/county-offices> or call them at 1-855-GACHILD (if you print a copy of DFCS numbers from their webpage, please update the hard copy regularly since DFCS updates the information frequently)
  - ii. Be prepared to give the child's name, address, age, the nature of the suspected abuse, the name of the suspected perpetrator and his/her relationship to the child.
  - iii. Follow-up with a letter to DFCS. You may contact the Safe Environment Office for assistance via email or phone at [pfreed@archatl.com](mailto:pfreed@archatl.com) or 404-920-7550
2. Call the Office of the District Attorney in the county where the abuse occurred. **(only if it involves Church Personnel)**
  - i. A list of District Attorney office contact numbers can be found at <http://www.archatl.com/offices/ocyp/report/da.html>
  - ii. Be prepared to give them the suspected victim's name, address, age, the nature of the suspected abuse, the name of the suspected perpetrator, and his/her relationship to the suspected victim.
  - iii. Follow-up with a letter to the District Attorney's Office. You may contact the Safe Environment Office for assistance via email or phone at [pfreed@archatl.com](mailto:pfreed@archatl.com) or 404-920-7550

### Reporting of Non-Compliance

If you know about or suspect misconduct, illegal activities, fraud, misuse of the Archdiocese's assets or violations of this Code, the "Ministerial Standards" or Archdiocesan policy you are to report these concerns to the Office of Safe Environment at 404-920-7550. There will be no retribution against you for making such a report in good faith. In fact, the Archdiocese strictly prohibits retaliation or threatened retaliation against you for reporting, in good faith, actual or suspected wrongdoing.

### Principles

Church Personnel of the Archdiocese of Atlanta shall:

- Actively support the teachings of the Catholic Church and work to build up the body of Christ in thought, word, deed and action.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of each person from conception to natural death, and conduct relationships with others in a manner that is consistent with Catholic teaching. This is an even higher obligation for supervisors.
- Meet civil and canon law obligations.

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- To the best of their ability, protect children, youth and vulnerable adults from all forms of abuse or neglect.
- Keep all information received in the course of counseling, spiritual direction or other professional or ministerial contact in the strictest confidence except as mandated by law.
- Refrain from making false accusations against another or revealing the faults and failings of another to those who have no right to know.
- Be responsible stewards of Church resources, human and financial, observing canon and civil law.
- Maintain a high level of competence in their particular ministry, and prudently attend to their own physical, spiritual, mental and emotional well-being.
- Avoid accepting or conferring an office, position, assignment or compensation, which may present even the appearance of a conflict of interest.
- Promptly report incidents of ethical misconduct or Sexual Abuse by other Church Personnel to the proper Church authority.
- Review and know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the State of Georgia and follow those requirements as applicable.
- Review and know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the Archdiocese of Atlanta and follow those requirements as applicable.
- Read, sign, understand and comply with this “Code of Conduct,” “Ministerial Standards” and the “Updated Policy of the Archdiocese of Atlanta Concerning the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Individuals From Sexual Abuse by Church Personnel before engaging in any form of ministerial work.

### **Behavioral Guidelines for Church Personnel Working with Minors**

Pastoral Standards for Volunteers, Lay Employees, Religious and Clergy include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Church Personnel are expected to maintain a high ethical and professional standard in their interaction with minors.
2. Church Personnel, unless they are the parent(s) and/or legal guardians of the child, are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for the behavior management of minors, except insofar as restraint may be necessary to prevent them from inflicting harm on themselves or others, in which case a detailed written record of the incident is to be made as soon as possible and maintained on file.
3. Church Personnel may never show, provide or make available in any way to minors sexually explicit or morally inappropriate materials. In essence, any discussion, materials, and personal interaction with minors are prohibited if they could not occur or be used in the presence of the minor’s parents or guardians. This does not preclude Archdiocesan-approved curricula in schools or religious education programs.
4. Church Personnel are prohibited from the using, possessing or being under the influence of any mind or mood altering substances, including alcohol, while working

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with minors. Church Personnel are prohibited from providing minors with any alcoholic beverage, tobacco, drugs or any substance prohibited by law. Medications of any kind may be administered to minors only with written parental permission unless you are the parent and/or legal guardian of the minor.

5. Church Personnel should schedule one-on-one counseling sessions or meetings with minors at times and locations that promote accountability and meet accepted standards of propriety. Pastors, principals or the administrator of the appropriate Archdiocesan agency and parent(s) or legal guardians must be notified in writing of any scheduled meeting involving a minor to assist in maintaining a safe environment for our children. Additionally, informal meetings should be the exception not the rule. However, if a minor approaches you and seeks immediate, brief assistance it should be documented and communicated to the pastor, principal, or the administrator of the appropriate Archdiocesan agency and parent or legal guardian if a meeting takes place that has not been scheduled or cleared by a parent or legal guardian in advance.
6. Church Personnel are prohibited from sleeping in the same bed, van, hotel room, sleeping bag or tent with a minor unless the adult is a parent, guardian or sibling. Sharing a bedroom, other than a large dormitory style room, should always be avoided. Church Personnel should not take an overnight trip alone with a minor who is not an immediate family member. Church Personnel should avoid being alone with a minor (not a member of the family) in a locker room, rest room, dressing, changing or showering facility. Furthermore, Church Personnel may not take photographs of minors who are unclothed or dressing, for example, in a locker room or bathing facility, nor shall they permit such photographs to be taken by others.
7. Church Personnel may not give minors keys to any Archdiocesan church or school facility.
8. Church Personnel shall not act as a chaperone for activities that conflict with curfew laws pertaining to minors.
9. Church Personnel observing or becoming aware of anyone (adult or minor) abusing a minor, must take immediate steps to intervene to provide a safe environment for the minor and report the misconduct in accord with Archdiocesan policies and civil law.
10. Church Personnel shall never date or give the appearance of dating a minor, engage in sexualized contact with a minor, give gifts that have more than an intrinsic value, or grant special privileges or opportunities to a specific minor.
11. Church Personnel shall not tutor, counsel, meet with individually or allow overnight stays in their personal residence to individuals to whom they minister unless they are the parent(s) and/or legal guardians. If you teach at the school or parish and have a child who is enrolled at the parish or school ask another responsible adult, preferably one who is not a relative, to assist you with supervision during a social event held at your home.
12. Church Personnel shall not engage in any form of behavior including: (a) verbal harassment, such as derogatory comments, jokes, or slurs; (b) visual harassment, such as derogatory or sexually explicit posters, cards, calendars, cartoons, graffiti, drawings, messages, notes or gestures; (c) sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

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13. Church Personnel shall not engage in any behavior that violates a prior written warning from the Archbishop.

### **Guidelines for the Supervision of Minors**

Guidelines include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Unless Church Personnel have a parent's or legal guardian's knowledge and consent in the form of a written permission slip, they are never to drive minors, unless there is a medical emergency or the child is theirs.
2. Programs for minors shall not be conducted by only one adult without additional adult presence.
3. Church Personnel shall report uncontrollable or unusual behavior of minors to parents as soon as possible.
4. Facilities shall be monitored during church services and all school and other activities.
5. Parents shall be encouraged to be part of all services and programs in which their children are involved.
6. Parental permission shall be obtained, including a signed medical treatment authorization form, before taking minors on trips. All due precautions for the safety and well-being of the children must be taken on such trips.
7. Written parental approval must be obtained before permitting any minor to participate in athletic or other activities that involve potential risk.

## *Ministerial Standards when Dealing Children and/or Vulnerable Individuals for Employees, Volunteers, and Independent Contractors*

### DO'S

Do know that pedophiles who prey on children and/or vulnerable individuals are very much a tiny minority but that a small number have put you in a potentially difficult stressful situation regarding your relationships with vulnerable individuals.

Do know that it is not your fault. You are also a secondary victim of the pedophiles who have abused vulnerable individuals.

Do know that you are right to feel uneasy and uncomfortable because of it.

Do know that you have a responsibility to protect yourself because the public often views you with caution. This is a side effect of the secondary abuse that you are experiencing as a result of pedophiles.

Do learn and comply with the Child Abuse Reporting Procedures under both the archdiocesan Policy and Georgia law. Have these policies easily accessible in your office.

Do know and comply with the Behavioral Guidelines, Guidelines for the Supervision of Minors, and Guidelines Specific to Employees contained in the Archdiocesan Code of Conduct. Have these policies easily accessible in your office.

Behavioral Guidelines, Which Should be Observed to Protect You and Those to Whom You Minister

Do love the children and/or vulnerable individuals to whom you minister with a carefully disciplined love.

Do make sure that any physical contact with a child and/or vulnerable individual is done in a manner that is beyond reproach and in a very public place.

Do treat every "child" (defined under the Archdiocesan Policy and Georgia law as a person "under 18 years of age") and vulnerable individual with the dignity he or she deserves by virtue of his or her creation by God in His image and likeness.

Do treat every vulnerable individual (defined under the archdiocesan policy and Georgia law) with the dignity he or she deserves by virtue of his or her creation by God in His image and likeness.

Do avoid being alone with a child and/or vulnerable individual in a closed room unless you are the child and/or vulnerable individual's parent or legal guardian. Protect yourself by having the door open/or closing a "see-through," glass-paneled door if the vulnerable individual insists on privacy with you.



## ***Ministerial Standards when Dealing Children and/or Vulnerable Individuals for Employees, Volunteers, and Independent Contractors***

Do have a parent or another adult around if the child and/or vulnerable individual does need privacy.

Do offer comfort and solace to those who are upset or grieving. Try not to do it by physically holding or hugging a child and/or vulnerable individual, if possible, unless you are the parent and/or legal guardian.

Do realize that a vulnerable individual, who is unable to speak, can say “no” to physical affection and refrain from displays of affection through their body language.

Do use only chaste language when speaking with a child and/or vulnerable individual.

Do dress modestly at all times, particularly when in the presence of a child and/or vulnerable individual.

Do always plan to provide adequate supervision before and after Archdiocesan functions. A ratio of one volunteer to every three vulnerable individuals is suggested during these planned activities. During study sessions and off-site activities, a ratio of one volunteer to every two vulnerable individuals is preferred.

From time to time you may find yourself unavoidably left with a child and/or vulnerable individual because of a parent or guardian’s failure to arrive at your facility on time to pick up that child and/or vulnerable individual at the conclusion of an Archdiocesan-sponsored program. While this is always a difficult and frustrating situation, it must be understood by all concerned that the safety and welfare of that child and/or vulnerable individual under those circumstances continues to be the moral and legal obligation of you and those associated with your program on behalf of the Archdiocese. In view of the foregoing, the following guidelines are set forth to provide you with an overview of how such situations should generally be handled:

- Under no circumstances should any child and/or vulnerable individual be left unattended. That child and/or vulnerable individual remains your obligation until such time as a family member or other responsible adult takes physical custody of that child and/or vulnerable individual.
- All reasonable efforts should be undertaken to contact the parent or guardian or other responsible family member of the child and/or vulnerable individual to arrange for their pick up.
- In the event those efforts are successful but the adult appearing to pick up the child and/or vulnerable individual is neither the parent nor the designated emergency contact person according to current records, you must confirm the identity of the adult and their

## ***Ministerial Standards when Dealing Children and/or Vulnerable Individuals for Employees, Volunteers, and Independent Contractors***

relationship to the child and/or vulnerable individual. Obviously, you must conclude through the use of sound judgment that the adult is an appropriate person to take custody of the child and/or vulnerable individual.

- In the event that all of these efforts are unsuccessful, you should call the local police authority and report the abandonment of the child and/or vulnerable individual and request the police to come to your facility to take custody of the child and/or vulnerable individual. The timing and decision to call local police authorities is to be based on your good judgment and professional assessment of the situation.
- You should not undertake to transport the vulnerable individual in your automobile to another location unless you have the written permission of the parent or legal guardian, there is a medical emergency, or the child and/or vulnerable individual is a relative.
- In the event that a parent or guardian's failure pick up in a timely manner a child and/or vulnerable individual is a repeated or consistent problem, this matter should be handled like any other disciplinary issue involving breach of program policies and procedures. This may result in the parent/guardian being directed to withdraw their child and/or vulnerable individual from the program.

### **DON'TS**

Don't blame yourself for this Church crisis. It is not your fault. The pedophile is the cause of the crisis, not you.

Don't isolate or remove yourself from vulnerable individuals. They need you. You are an important person in their growth and development in their relationship with God and the Church.

Don't ignore your own feelings about the way your life has been impacted by the media coverage of abuse of child and/or vulnerable individuals in the Catholic Church. Make time for prayer and spiritual direction. Do what it takes to remain healthy and spiritually strong.

**Behavioral Guidelines, Which Should be Observed to Protect You and Those to Whom You Minister**

Do not physically or emotionally abuse any child and/or vulnerable individual, including, but not limited to, physically or emotionally punishing a child and/or vulnerable individual.

Do not sexually abuse or exploit any child and/or vulnerable individual as defined by Archdiocesan Policy.

## ***Ministerial Standards when Dealing Children and/or Vulnerable Individuals for Employees, Volunteers, and Independent Contractors***

Do not permit any child and/or vulnerable individual, unless you are their parent or legal guardian, to enter your home or living quarters unless accompanied by a parent or guardian.

If you teach at the parish/school and a child and/or vulnerable individual who is enrolled in the parish/school as a guest in your home, ask another responsible adult, preferably not related to you in attendance if possible, to assist you with supervision during a social event held at your home.

If a social event including a vulnerable individual is held at your home, have an adult who is not related to you, in attendance if possible, or at Remember to have at least three other responsible volunteers for each person with a disability assisting you with supervision during that event.

Do not permit a child and/or vulnerable individual to have possession of a key to any Archdiocesan facility.

Do not allow a child and/or vulnerable individual unsupervised access to any Archdiocesan facility.

Do not sleep alone in the same room with a vulnerable individual, unless you are a relative.

Do not take an overnight trip alone with a child and/or vulnerable individual, unless the child and/or vulnerable individual is you are a relative.

Do not allow a child and/or vulnerable individual to sleep in the same room with you unless the child and/or vulnerable individual is a relative.

Do not use open bathroom facilities in the presence of a child and/or vulnerable individual, unless you are a relative.

Do not dress or undress yourself in the presence of a child and/or vulnerable individual, unless you are a relative.

Do not allow a child and/or vulnerable individual, unless you are a relative, to dress or undress in your presence.

Do not provide toileting assistance for a child and/or vulnerable individual unless you are a relative.

If a vulnerable individual regularly needs assistance in the bathroom, family members, a guardian, medical personnel, or official caregivers should provide this assistance. If a vulnerable individual needs emergency bathroom assistance, two responsible adults of the same gender as the vulnerable individual should assist. Plan for this assistance before the need arises.

## ***Ministerial Standards when Dealing Children and/or Vulnerable Individuals for Employees, Volunteers, and Independent Contractors***

Do not fail to make plans for dressing, toileting, transferring and bathing assistance needs well in advance of any weekend/overnight retreat or conference. If a family member, guardian, medical personnel, or official caregivers are not available, only previously trained staff and previously trained responsible adult volunteers should provide this function. If those persons are not available, the vulnerable individual should not attend.

Do not provide any vulnerable individual, unless you are their parent or legal guardian, with alcohol or tobacco.

Do not provide any child and/or vulnerable individual with alcohol, tobacco, legal or illegal prescription or non-prescription drugs unless you are the child's and/or vulnerable individual's parent or legal guardian or unless the prescription medication is administered by a medical professional.

Do not provide any vulnerable individual, unless you are their parent or legal guardian, with a drug of any kind.

Do not accompany a child and/or vulnerable individual, who is not accompanied by a parent or guardian, to any place that is principally engaged in the sale of alcohol (a bar, liquor store or night club); provided however, nothing herein shall prohibit your accompanying such child or vulnerable individual to a place in which the availability of alcohol is merely incidental to other recreational or social activities at said location (ballgame, concert or restaurant). Written permission must be obtained from the child's and/or vulnerable individual's parent or guardian in advance of attendance at any such social or recreational events.

Do not allow a child and/or vulnerable individual, unless you are their parent or legal guardian, to self-medicate in your presence.

Do not permit a vulnerable individual to have possession of a key to any Archdiocesan facility.

Do not allow a vulnerable individual unsupervised access to any Archdiocesan facility.

Do not permit a child and/or vulnerable individual to leave the Archdiocesan church or facility during a scheduled class, event or function without adult supervision.

Do not accompany a vulnerable individual, unless you are their parent or legal guardian, to any place that serves alcohol.

Do not provide any child and/or vulnerable individual with pornography or permit a child and/or vulnerable individual to have possess or view pornography in his or her possession in your presence.

## ***Ministerial Standards when Dealing Children and/or Vulnerable Individuals for Employees, Volunteers, and Independent Contractors***

Do not take photos of a child and/or vulnerable individuals without the consent of their parent or legal guardian.

Do not pay for or otherwise accompany vulnerable individuals, unless you are their parent or legal guardian, to watch any movie, video or television program unless it has a G or PG-13 rating.

Do not pay for or otherwise accompany a child and/or vulnerable individual to watch any movie or video that does not have a G or PG-13 rating, and never on your own unless you are the parent or legal guardian. If you teach at the parish/school and have a child and/or vulnerable individual under your supervision who is enrolled in the parish/school ask another responsible adult, preferably one who is not related to you, to assist you with supervision during any social event.

Do not accompany a vulnerable individual to an amusement park or other recreational activity unless also accompanied by the vulnerable individual's family member, guardian or official caregiver or unless it is an official Church- or Disabilities Ministry-sponsored event. Do not accompany a child and/or vulnerable individual to an amusement park or other recreational activity unless accompanied by the child's and/or vulnerable individual's parent or guardian or unless it is a school-sponsored field trip. If you teach at the parish/school and have a child and/or vulnerable individual under your supervision who is enrolled in the parish/school, ask your spouse or another responsible adult, preferably one who is not related to you, to assist you with supervision during any social event.

Do not use profanity, sexually expressive or vulgar language in the presence of a child and/or vulnerable individual.

Do not allow music to be played that contains profanity, is sexually expressive, or has vulgar language.

Do not meet alone with a vulnerable individual unless you are his/her parent or legal guardian.

Do not agree to meet children and/or vulnerable individuals at any social event outside of parish/school time unless you are the parent and/or legal guardian of the child and/or vulnerable individual.

Do not teach, or counsel or tutor a child and/or vulnerable individual at your home unless you are his/her parent or legal guardian. The child and/or vulnerable individual is a relative or another adult is present.

Do not drive a child and/or vulnerable individual in your automobile unless you have a written permission slip from the parent or guardian, there is a medical emergency, the child and/or vulnerable individual is a relative, or you are the child's and/or vulnerable individual's parent or legal guardian.

## ***Ministerial Standards when Dealing Children and/or Vulnerable Individuals for Employees, Volunteers, and Independent Contractors***

Do not allow a child and/or vulnerable individual to remain in the presence of only one other person who is not the vulnerable individual's family member, guardian, medical personnel, or official caregiver. Arrangements should be made in advance for another volunteer to monitor such situations.

Do not give or accept personal gifts, having any intrinsic value, to or from children and/or a vulnerable individuals unless you are their parent or legal guardian.

Do not discuss your personal life with a child and/or vulnerable individual unless you are their parent or legal guardian.

Do not discuss the personal lives of clergy, educators, employees, staff and/or volunteers with a child and/or vulnerable individual.

Do not have any physical contact while dancing with a child and/or vulnerable individual unless you are a relative.

Do not accept a baby-sitting or house-sitting assignment for any child and/or vulnerable individual served by this ministry.

Do not visit children and/or vulnerable individuals at their homes without the permission of the parent and/or legal guardian.

Do not permit undocumented volunteers (no Social Security number, known background check, and/or no evidence of safe environment training, and/or no code of conduct signature) to assist you with the care of children and/or vulnerable individuals.

Do not call children and/or vulnerable individuals at home either on land lines, cell phones or pagers unless the child and/or vulnerable individual is a relative or the parent or legal guardian has given you written permission to communicate with the child and/or vulnerable individual in this fashion.

Do not e-mail or text children and/or vulnerable individuals at home or provide them with your personal e-mail address unless the child and/or vulnerable individual is a relative or the parent or legal guardian has given you permission to communicate with the child and/or vulnerable individual in this fashion.

Do not date any currently matriculated child and/or vulnerable individual served by this ministry, regardless of their age.

**Clergy and Religious  
Ministerial Standards when  
Dealing with Children and/or Vulnerable Individuals**

**DO'S**

**Do** know that pedophiles among Catholic clergy and Religious are very much a small minority, but that a small number have put you in a very stressful situation regarding your relationships with children and/or vulnerable individuals.

**Do** know that it is not your fault. You are also a secondary victim of the pedophiles who have abused our children and/or vulnerable individuals.

**Do** know that you are right to feel uneasy and uncomfortable because of it.

**Do** know that you have a responsibility to protect yourself because the public often views you with caution. This is a side effect of the secondary abuse that you are experiencing as a result of pedophiles.

**Do** learn and comply with the Child Abuse Reporting Procedures under both the *Archdiocesan Policy* and Georgia law. Have these policies easily accessible in your office.

**Do** know and comply with the Behavioral Guidelines, Guidelines for the Supervision of Minors, and Guidelines Specific to Clergy contained in the *Archdiocesan Code of Conduct*. Have these policies easily accessible in your office.

**Behavioral Guidelines, Which Should be Observed to Protect You and Those to Whom You Minister**

**Do** love the children and vulnerable individuals with a carefully disciplined love.

**Do** make sure that any physical contact with a child and/or vulnerable individual is done in a manner that is beyond reproach and is in a very public place.

**Do** treat every "child" (defined under the *Archdiocesan Policy* and Georgia law as a person "under 18 years of age") and vulnerable individual with the dignity he or she deserves by virtue of his or her creation by God in His image and likeness.

**Do** avoid being alone with a child and/or vulnerable individual in a closed room unless he/she is a relative. Protect yourself by having the door open/or closing a "see-through," glass-paneled door if the child and/or vulnerable individual insists on privacy with you.

**Clergy and Religious**  
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**Do** have a parent or another adult around if the child and/or vulnerable does not need privacy and he/she is not a relative.

**Do** offer comfort and solace to those who are upset or grieving. Try not to do it by physically holding or hugging a child and/or vulnerable individual, if possible, unless he/she is a relative.

**Do** use only chaste language when speaking with a child and/or vulnerable individual (or any other person in the presence of a child and/or vulnerable individual).

**Do** dress modestly at all times, particularly when in the presence of a child and/or vulnerable individual.

From time to time you may find yourself unavoidably left with a child and/or vulnerable individual because of a parent or guardian's failure to arrive at your facility on time to pick up that child and/or vulnerable individual at the conclusion of an Archdiocesan-sponsored program. While this is always a difficult and frustrating situation, it must be understood by all concerned that the safety and welfare of that child and/or vulnerable individual under those circumstances continues to be the moral and legal obligation of you and those associated with your program on behalf of the Archdiocese. In view of the foregoing, the following guidelines are set forth to provide you with an overview of how such situations should generally be handled:

- Under no circumstances should any child and/or vulnerable individual be left unattended.
- That child and/or vulnerable individual remains your obligation until such time as a family member or other responsible adult takes physical custody of that child and/or vulnerable individual.
- All reasonable efforts should be undertaken to contact the parent or guardian or other responsible family member of the child and/or vulnerable individual to arrange for their pick up.
- In the event those efforts are successful but the adult appearing to pick up the child and/or vulnerable individual is neither the parent nor the designated emergency contact person according to current records, you must confirm the identity of the adult and their relationship to the child and/or vulnerable individual. Obviously, you must conclude through the use of sound judgment



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that the adult is an appropriate person to take custody of the child and/or vulnerable individual.

- In the event that all of these efforts are unsuccessful, you should call the local police authority and report the abandonment of the child and/or vulnerable individual and request the police to come to your facility to take custody of the child and/or vulnerable individual. The timing and decision to call local police authorities is to be based on your good judgment and professional assessment of the situation.
- You should not undertake to transport a child and/or vulnerable individual in your automobile to another location unless you have the written permission of the parent or legal guardian, there is a medical emergency or the child and/or vulnerable individual is a relative.
- In the event that a parent or guardian's failure to timely pick up a child and/or vulnerable individual is a repeated or consistent problem, this matter should be handled like any other disciplinary issue involving breach of program policies and procedures. This may result in the parents/guardians being directed to withdraw their child and/or vulnerable individual from the program.

**DON'TS**

**Don't** blame yourself for this Church crisis. It is not your fault. The pedophile is the cause of the crisis, not you.

**Don't** isolate or remove yourself from the children and/or vulnerable individuals. They need you. You are an important person in their growth and development in their relationship with God and the Church.

**Don't** ignore your own feelings about the way your life has been impacted by the media coverage of abuse of children in the Catholic Church. Make time for prayer and spiritual direction. Do what it takes to remain healthy and spiritually strong.

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***Ministerial Standards when***  
***Dealing with Children and/or Vulnerable Individuals***

**Behavioral Guidelines, Which Should be Observed to Protect You and Those to Whom You Minister**

**Do not** physically or emotionally abuse any child and/or vulnerable individual, including, but not limited to, physically or emotionally punishing a child and/or vulnerable individual.

**Do not** sexually abuse or exploit any child and/or vulnerable individual, as that term is defined under Georgia law, section 1.5 of the *Archdiocesan Policy*, or canon 1395.2 of the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*.

**Do not** permit any child and/or vulnerable individual to enter your home or living quarters unless accompanied by their parent or guardian. If you are a priest and the child and/or vulnerable individual is a relative you must have permission from the Archbishop before allowing a minor to stay in your rectory.

**Do not** permit a child and/or vulnerable individual to have unsupervised access to any archdiocesan facilities or buildings.

**Do not** take an overnight trip alone with any child and/or vulnerable individual unless he/she is a relative.

**Do not** dress or undress yourself in the presence of a child and/or vulnerable individual or allow a child and/or vulnerable individual to dress or undress in your presence unless he/she is a relative.

**Do not** allow a child and/or vulnerable individual to sleep in the same room with you unless he/she is a relative.

**Do not** provide any child and/or vulnerable individual with alcohol, tobacco, legal or illegal prescription or non-prescription drugs unless he/she is a relative.

**Do not** accompany a child and/or vulnerable individual, who is not accompanied by a parent or guardian, to any place that serves alcohol unless he/she is a relative or you are the legal guardian.

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**Do not** provide any child and/or vulnerable individual with pornography or permit a child and/or vulnerable individual to have pornography in his or her possession in your presence.

**Do not** pay for or otherwise accompany a child and/or vulnerable individual to watch any movie or video that does not have a G or PG -13 rating, unless he/she is a relative.

**Do not** use profanity or sexually expressive or vulgar language, but particularly when in the presence of a child and/or vulnerable individual.

**Do not** allow music to be played which contains profanity, sexually expressive or vulgar language.

**Do not** meet alone with a child and/or vulnerable individual for any reason, unless he/she is a relative, other than for the Sacrament of Penance, and then with the safeguards called for in the Archdiocesan liturgical guidelines.

**Do not** drive a child and/or vulnerable individual alone in your automobile unless he/she is a relative.

**Do not** allow a child and/or vulnerable individual to remain in the presence of only one other person, who is not the child's and/or vulnerable individual's parent or guardian, particularly a person who is not at least five years older than the child.

**Do not** meet with a child and/or vulnerable individual in a room without a window or without the door being open unless he/she is a relative.

**Do not** discuss your personal life with children and/or vulnerable individuals unless he/she is a relative.

**Do not** discuss the personal lives of fellow clergy, archdiocesan employees, or volunteers with children and/or vulnerable individuals.

# Policy Concerning Disabled Adult and Elder Person Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation

## Introduction

Abuse, Neglect, and/or Exploitation of Disabled Adults and Elder Persons is reprehensible and tragic. It betrays the trust Disabled Adults and Elder Persons naturally place in those tasked with their care. It is even more tragic when its consequence is a loss of the faith that the Catholic Church has a sacred duty to foster. Our obligation to protect Disabled Adults and Elder Persons stems from the mission and example given to us by Jesus Christ himself, in whose name we serve. We want to be as transparent and forthcoming as possible regarding the policies and procedures used by the Archdiocese. Our goals as an Archdiocese are to: (1) provide a safe and secure environment for the Disabled Adults and Elder Persons in the Archdiocese; (2) provide for a pastoral response to victims, their families, the accused person, and the community; and (3) reduce the damage done by false accusations against Church Personnel.

## Section 1: Definitions

The following words and phrases shall, for purposes of this Policy, have the following meanings:

- 1.1 Abuse. The willful infliction of physical pain, physical injury, Sexual Abuse, mental anguish, or unreasonable confinement upon a Disabled Adult, Elder Person, or Resident, or the willful deprivation of essential services to a Disabled Adult, Elder Person, or Resident.
- 1.2 Actionable. A determination by the Archbishop that an allegation is more likely than not true.
- 1.3 Administrative Leave. The status of an accused Church Personnel who has been relieved of assigned duties. The application of this term varies depending on the canonical status of the accused person and does not necessarily equate to the term as used in Canon Law.
- 1.4 Advisory Board. The board described in Section 8 of this Policy and Section 8 of the "Updated Policy of the Archdiocese of Atlanta Concerning the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Individuals from Sexual Abuse by Church Personnel"
- 1.5 Alzheimer's Disease. A progressive, degenerative disease or condition that attacks the brain and results in impaired memory, thinking, and behavior.
- 1.6 Archbishop. The canonically appointed Archbishop of Atlanta or the duly appointed Administrator in the event that, under Canon Law, the office of the Archbishop is impeded or vacant. For purposes of this Policy, the Archbishop may act personally or through a designated representative.

## **Policy Concerning Disabled Adult and Elder Person Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation**

- 1.7 Church Personnel. Bishops, priests, deacons, religious, lay employees and lay volunteers involved in work for the Archdiocese.
- 1.8 Credible Allegation. An allegation, which offers reasonable grounds for being believed.
- 1.9 Dementia. (a) An irreversible global loss of cognitive function causing evident intellectual impairment which always includes memory loss, without alteration of state of consciousness, as diagnosed by a physician, and is severe enough to interfere with work or social activities, or both, and to require at least intermittent care or supervision; or (2) the comatose state of an adult resulting from any head injury.
- 1.10 Disabled Adult. A person eighteen (18) years of age or older who is mentally or physically incapacitated or has Alzheimer's disease or dementia.
- 1.11 Elder Person. A person sixty-five (65) years of age or older.
- 1.12 Essential Services. Social, psychiatric, or legal services necessary to safeguard a disabled adult's, elder person's, or resident's rights and resources and to maintain the physical and mental well-being of such person. Such services may include, but not be limited to, the provision of medical care for physical and mental health needs, assistance in personal hygiene, food, clothing, adequately heated and ventilated shelter, and protection from health and safety hazards.
- 1.13 Exploitation. Illegally or improperly using a disabled adult or elder person or that person's resources through undue influence, coercion, harassment, duress, deception, false representation, false pretense, or other similar means for one's own or another person's profit or advantage.
- 1.14 Long-Term Facility. Any skilled nursing facility, intermediate care home, assisted living community, community living arrangement, or personal care home subject to regulation and licensure by the Department of Community Health.
- 1.15 Neglect. The willful deprivation of health care, shelter, or necessary sustenance to the extent that the health or well-being of a Disabled Adult, Elder Person, or Resident is jeopardized.
- 1.16 Resident. Any person who is receiving treatment or care in any long-term care facility.

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1.17 Sexual Abuse. The coercion for the purpose of self-gratification by a guardian or other person supervising the welfare or having immediate charge, control, or custody of a disabled adult, elder person, or resident to engage in any of the following conduct:

(A) Lewd exhibition of the genitals or pubic area of any person;

(B) Flagellation or torture by or upon a person who is unclothed or partially unclothed;

(C) Condition of being fettered, bound, or otherwise physically restrained on the part of a person who is unclothed or partially clothed unless physical restraint is medically indicated;

(D) Physical contact in an act of sexual stimulation or gratification with any person's unclothed genitals, pubic area, or buttocks or with a female's nude breasts;

(E) Defecation or urination for the purpose of sexual stimulation of the viewer; or

(F) Penetration

1.18 Volunteer. Any unpaid person involved in a ministry, activity or service under the authority of the Archdiocese

### **Section 2: Prohibited Conduct**

Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of Disabled Adults, Elder Persons, and Residents is reprehensible and tragic. Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation by Church Personnel will not be tolerated. All Church Personnel are required to observe appropriate boundaries and behavior, which will avoid the occurrence of Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of Disabled Adults, Elder Persons, and Residents.

### **Section 3: Service Application Forms for Employees and Volunteers**

3.1 An application, in a form promulgated, or approved in writing, by the Archbishop ("Service Application") must be completed by each applicant for any paid position in the Archdiocese and also by any Volunteer who has regular contact with Disabled Adults, Elder Persons, or Residents. All completed "Service Applications" must be kept as part of the parish/agency/long-term care facility personnel files.

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3.2 Each applicant for any position in the Archdiocese and each Volunteer who has regular contact with Disabled Adults, Elder Persons, or Residents must, as a condition of employment, ministry or service to the Archdiocese, consent to a "Background Check." The "Background Check" will be completed in accordance with the requirements of the "Background Investigation" consent form. The pastor or administrator shall be responsible for reviewing the information thus acquired to determine that there is nothing present which would indicate the person is unfit for the employment, ministry or service for which he or she has applied.

3.3 A copy of the "Service Application," including the "Background Check," and other form on file shall be sent to the Archdiocesan Human Resources Office for the Archdiocese. Upon termination of employment, ministry or service, a copy of the complete parish/agency/long-term care facility personnel file is to be sent to the Archdiocesan Human Resources Office.

### **Section 4: Service Application Forms for Clergy and Religious**

4.1 All superiors of religious institutions or orders proposing individuals for ministry or residence in Archdiocesan parishes or institutions, as well as those simply requesting priestly faculties in the Archdiocese, are required to state clearly in writing that there is no known history which would render the individual being proposed unsuitable to work with Disabled Adults, Elder Persons, or Residents, including, but not limited to, any past allegation of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation. This may be done through the use of form "Statement of the Religious Superior."

4.2 Clergy, religious or seminarians seeking assignment to perform ministry within the Archdiocese of Atlanta must, before beginning the assignment, have on file with the Archdiocese the "Application by a priest for service in the Archdiocese of Atlanta."

4.3 Clergy, religious or seminarians seeking assignment to perform ministry for six (6) consecutive days or more must complete the form, "Application for Assignment," and as a condition of assignment must consent to a "Background Check," which will be performed by the Archdiocese, before such assignment is made.

4.4 No pastor, parochial vicar, religious or director of any Archdiocesan institution or facility is permitted to grant residence, or full-time, part-time or regular weekend ministry to any priest, religious or layperson without prior approval from the Archbishop.

4.5 Before any clergy or religious is proposed to another diocese for assignment, transfer, or residence, the Archbishop will make notification, similar in nature to the "Statement of Religious Superior," to the local ordinary of the new residence.

## **Policy Concerning Disabled Adult and Elder Person Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation**

### **Section 5: Reporting Requirements**

5.1 Any Church Personnel who has reasonable cause to believe that Abuse, Neglect or Exploitation has occurred and who has mandatory reporting requirements under federal, state or local law, including, but not limited to, O.C.G.A. §§ 30-5-1, *et seq.*, 31-8-81, *et. seq.*, shall report, or cause a report of that Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation to be made as required by law. An oral report shall be made immediately, but in no case later than twenty-four (24) hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a Disabled Adult or Elder person has been abused, neglected, or exploited, by telephone or otherwise and followed by a report in writing as outlined in the "Procedure for Processing Allegations of Disabled Adult, Elder Person, and Resident Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation or Need for Services." A copy of that report shall be sent immediately and confidentially to the Archbishop, or one of the Vicars General, or in their absence, the Director of the Safe Environment Office of the Archdiocese, who will then advise the Archbishop. The Archbishop will provide a copy of the report to the Advisory Board if it involves clergy or Religious. The Secretary of Human Resources will be provided a copy of the report if it involves lay employees or volunteers.

5.2 Church Personnel who are not required to report Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation pursuant to Paragraph 5.1 of this Policy, but who have reasonable cause to believe that Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation has occurred shall immediately confidentially report the information to the Archbishop, or one of the Vicars General, or in their absence, to the Director of the Safe Environment Office of the Archdiocese, unless to do so would violate the priest-penitent relationship of the Sacrament of Penance. The Archbishop will assign a person to investigate the allegations and will provide a summary to the Advisory Board if it involves clergy or Religious. The Secretary of Human Resources will be provided a copy of the report if it involves lay employees or volunteers.

5.3 Each reported incident of alleged Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation shall be investigated immediately by the Archbishop or his designated representative, in cooperation with any state or federal criminal investigation, with a high degree of pastoral care for the alleged victim and his or her family, the person reporting the incident, the accused person and all other persons whose lives reasonably can be expected by the Archbishop to be affected significantly by the alleged incident.

5.4 In the event a report received by the Archbishop presents a Credible Allegation of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation, the Archbishop or his designated representative shall in turn report the information to the appropriate government authorities as provide by O.C.G.A. §§ 30-



## **Policy Concerning Disabled Adult and Elder Person Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation**

5-1, *et seq.*, 31-8-81, *et. seq.* Whether or not a report received by the Archbishop presents a Credible Allegation in the opinion of the Archbishop, a copy of the report shall be sent to the Advisory Board, if it involves clergy or Religious. The Secretary of Human Resources will be provided a copy of the report if it involves lay employees or volunteers.

5.6 Without limiting the provisions of Subsections 5.1 through 5.4 of this Policy, it is the policy of the Archdiocese to comply with all applicable civil laws with respect to the reporting of allegations of abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Disabled Adults, Elder Persons, or Residents to civil authorities and to advise and support a person's right to make a report to public authorities.

### **Section 6: When Allegations are Made Against a Lay Employee or Volunteer**

6.1 When any allegation of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation with respect to an Archdiocesan lay employee or Volunteer is reported to the Archbishop, the Archbishop shall immediately notify the Secretary of Human Resources of the person(s) alleged to be involved, and the substance of the allegations.

6.2 Immediately after receipt of an allegation of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation with respect to a lay employee or Volunteer, the Archbishop shall cause a preliminary investigation to be undertaken in accordance with Archdiocesan employment policies and may undertake such additional or independent investigation as he deems necessary. Based on the results of preliminary investigations, the Archbishop shall make a determination as to the credibility of the allegations and he or his designee shall communicate his determination in a timely manner to the victim or the victim's representative and the accused person.

6.3 If the Archbishop determines that an allegation of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation involving a lay employee or Volunteer is a Credible Allegation, then in addition to any action taken pursuant to Archdiocesan employment policies, the accused person shall be:

- i. Notified in a timely manner of the nature of the allegations;*
- ii. Placed on administrative leave pending the completion of the Archdiocesan investigation; and*
- iii. Directed to remain away from any long-term care facility, parish office, parish facility, agency, and other location, which is the subject of the complaint until the Archbishop has determined whether the allegation is Actionable.*

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6.4 The Archbishop may request that the Secretary of Human Resources advise him in making his determination as to whether an allegation is Actionable. If a lay employee or Volunteer admits that he or she has engaged in Abuse, Neglect or Exploitation, does not contest

Credible Allegations of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation, or there is a determination by the Archbishop that an allegation of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation is Actionable, sanctions will be imposed in accordance with any applicable provisions of Canon Law, the regular employment policies of the Archdiocese as amplified by this Policy, and Section 12 of this Policy. The Archbishop or his designee shall communicate his determination as to whether the allegation is Actionable to the victim or the victim's designated representative, the accused person, and others required to be notified pursuant to Archdiocesan employment policies.

6.5 In instances where an allegation of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation is determined not to be Actionable, the Archbishop will make a determination as to whether the accused person is to be restored to duty and/or whether in his or her former position. The Archbishop may request the advice of the Secretary of Human Resources in making that determination. The Archbishop shall communicate his final determination as to restoration of duties to the alleged victim or the victim's designated representative and the accused person.

6.6 When an allegation is determined by the Archbishop not to be Actionable, the Archdiocese will make good faith efforts to restore the ministerial reputation and status of the accused person.

6.7 In response to a Credible Allegation of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation involving a lay employee or Volunteer, the Archbishop will take reasonable action to provide the family of the victim with appropriate spiritual care and pastoral support. Such care and support will be coordinated through the Office of Save Environment. Any pastor-priest or other person designated by the Archbishop to assist in this pastoral process should avoid being concerned with the validity of the allegations. His or her function is strictly pastoral in nature without regard to the truth of any allegation or to the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident. The person who reported the alleged Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation shall also be given appropriate pastoral care.

6.8 In all instance of alleged Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation by a lay employee or Volunteer, reasonable care will be taken to protect the rights of all parties involved, particularly those of the person claiming to have been Abused, Neglected, or Exploited and the person against whom the charge has been made. It is the responsibility of any lay employee or Volunteer who is accused of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation to obtain his or her own personal legal representation.

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### **Section 7: When Allegations are Made Against Clergy or Religious in Service to the Archdiocese or Residing in an Archdiocesan Rectory, Convent or Facility**

7.1 When any allegation of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation with respect to Archdiocesan clergy, or any other clergy or religious within the Archdiocese, is reported to the Archbishop, the Archbishop shall notify the Advisory Board of the person(s) alleged to be involved and the substance of the allegations.

7.2 Immediately after receipt of an allegation of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation involving a member of the clergy or Religious, the Archbishop shall undertake a preliminary investigation of the allegation, which investigation will be initiated and conducted in harmony with Canon Law. Based upon the results of his investigation, the Archbishop shall make a determination as to the credibility of the allegations, and communicate his determination in a timely manner to the victim or the victim's representative, the accused person, and the Advisory Board. The Archbishop may request that the Advisory Board advise him in making his determination as to whether an allegation is a Credible Allegation.

7.3 If the Archbishop determines that an allegation of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation that has been made against a member of the clergy or religious is a Credible Allegation, the accused person shall be:

- i. Notified in a timely manner of the nature of the allegations;*
- ii. Immediately relieved of his or her active ministerial duties pending the outcome of the Archbishop's investigation; and*
- iii. Directed to remain away from any long-term care facility, parish office, parish facility, agency, and other location, which is the subject of the complaint until the Archbishop has determined whether the allegation is Actionable.*

7.4 The Archbishop may request that the Advisory Board advise him in making his determination as to whether an allegation is Actionable. If a member of the clergy or Religious admits that he or she has engaged in Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation, or if there is a determination by the Archbishop after an appropriate process in accord with Canon Law that an allegation is Actionable, sanctions will be imposed in accordance with Section 12 of this Policy. If an allegation is determined by the Archbishop to be a Credible Allegation or Actionable, the Archbishop shall consult with the Advisory Board in making an assessment of the accused person's fitness for ministry. The Archbishop shall communicate his final determination as to whether the allegation is Actionable, and the sanctions imposed, in writing,

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to the victim or the victim's designated representative, the accused person and the Advisory Board.

7.5 As provided in Section 12.5 of this Policy, in every case involving allegations of Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation against clergy or Religious, the processes as provided for in, and the various provisions of, Canon Law will be observed and in the event of an irreconcilable conflict between the applicable provision of Canon Law and this Policy, the provisions of Canon Law will prevail. This may include a request by a priest or deacon for dispensation from the obligation of holy orders, or by the bishop proceeding to seek dismissal from the clerical state even without the consent of the priest or deacon. In accordance with due process, the accused person will be encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel. When necessary, the Archdiocese will provide canonical counsel to any accused priest or deacon.

7.6 Where an allegation of Abuse, Neglect or Exploitation by a member of the clergy or Religious is not admitted or it is determined by the Archbishop after an appropriate investigation not to be Actionable and the Archbishop has not determined that the accused person is unfit for ministry, the Archdiocese will make reasonable efforts to restore the ministerial reputation and status of the priest, deacon, or Religious.

7.7 If the Archbishop determines that an allegation of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation, which has been made with respect to a member of the clergy or Religious from a diocese or congregation other than the Archdiocese of Atlanta is Actionable, the Archbishop will immediately notify the appropriate superior of the actions which have been taken and will be taken by the Archdiocese.

7.8 In response to a Credible Allegation of Abuse, Neglect or Exploitation involving a member of the clergy or Religious, the Archbishop will take reasonable action to provide the family of the alleged victim with appropriate spiritual care and pastoral supports. Such care and support will be coordinated through the Safe Environment Office. Any pastor, priest or other person designated by the Archbishop to assist in this pastoral process should avoid being concerned with the validity of the allegations. His or her function is strictly pastoral in nature without regard to the truth of any allegation or to the circumstances surrounding any alleged incident. The person who reported the alleged Abuse, Neglect or Exploitation shall also be given appropriate pastoral care.

7.9 In all instances, care will be taken to protect the rights of all parties involved, particularly those of the person claiming to have been a victim of Abuse, Neglect or Exploitation and the person against whom the allegation has been made.

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## **Section 8: Advisory Board**

The Advisory Board as outlined in Section 8 of the “Updated Policy of the Archdiocese of Atlanta Concerning the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Individuals from Sexual Abuse by Church Personnel” also shall be used by the Archdiocese when dealing with allegations of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Disabled Adults, Elder Persons, or Residents.

## **Section 9: Archdiocesan Office of Safe Environment and Office of Victim Assistance**

The goal of the Office of Safe Environment and the Office of Victim Assistance is to protect disabled adults, elder persons, and other vulnerable individuals from abuse, neglect, and exploitation and provide a safe environment in the Archdiocese of Atlanta. Each office has a different purpose, as described below.

9.1 The Archdiocesan Office of Victim Assistance shall aid in the immediate pastoral care of persons who claim to have been a victim of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation by Church Personnel. In addition, the office will ensure that the family of the alleged victim will receive appropriate spiritual care and pastoral support. The head of the office, at the direction of the Archbishop, will coordinate and monitor the spiritual care and pastoral support supplied to alleged victims and to the family members of alleged victims of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation including but not limited to, counseling, spiritual assistance, support groups, or other social services agreed upon by the alleged victim and the Archdiocese.

9.2 The Office of Safe Environment, at the direction and instruction of the Archbishop, will assist the Archdiocese in establishing and maintaining “safe environment programs.” The office will cooperate with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, parents, pastors and ministers, educators and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for Disabled Adults and Elder Persons.

## **Section 10: Complaints**

10.1 The Archbishop shall adopt procedures for making complaints or allegations of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation involving Church Personnel. The procedures shall be made readily

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available in printed form and will be the subject of periodic public announcements regarding those procedures.

10.2 The Archdiocese shall cooperate with authorized state and federal civil and criminal authorities in their investigations of allegations of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Disabled Adults, Elders Persons, or Residents involving Church Personnel.

### **Section 11: Media and Communications**

11.1 a) The Archdiocese is committed to openness and transparency in its dealings with the community, especially with the parish communities and other constituent communities of the Archdiocese which may be directly affected by ministerial misconduct involving Disabled Adults, Elder Persons, or Residents and will meet this commitment to the extent possible while also respecting the privacy and reputations of individuals involved.

b) The Communications Office is responsible for all media contact; therefore, all media inquiries regarding this Policy, alleged Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Disabled Adults, Elder Persons, or Residents involving Church Personnel, and related matters which are made to long-term care facilities, parishes, or agencies of the Archdiocese should be referred to the Communications Office, which will consult with, guide and coordinate relevant persons in the handling of subsequent media inquiries and responses.

11.2 The Archdiocese will not enter into confidentiality agreements with respect to alleged Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Disabled Adults, Elder Persons, or Residents, except in cases where confidentiality is requested by a victim or survivor of such Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation for grave and substantial reasons proffered by the victim or survivor, which reasons are noted in the text of the confidentiality agreement.

### **Section 12: Sanctions**

12.1 Where Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Disabled Adults, Elder Persons, or Residents by a lay employee or Volunteer is admitted or an allegation of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Disabled Adults, Elder Persons, or Residents is determined by the Archbishop to be Actionable, the accused person shall be immediately terminated as a Church Personnel.

12.2 a) Where Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Disabled Adults, Elder Persons, or Residents by a member of the clergy or Religious is admitted, or an allegation Abuse, Neglect,

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or Exploitation of Disabled Adults, Elder Persons, or Residents is determined by the Archbishop to be Actionable after an appropriate process in accord with Canon law:

- i. The accused person shall be permanently removed from active ministry and will not receive a future assignment;*
- ii. The accused person shall not be transferred for ministerial assignment;*
- iii. Under no circumstances shall the accused person ever be allowed to minister in the Archdiocese of Atlanta; and*
- iv. If the penalty of dismissal from the clerical state has not been applied (e.g. for reasons of advanced age or infirmity), the accused person shall be required to lead a life of prayer and penance; and if he is a member of the clergy, he will not be permitted to celebrate Mass publicly, to wear clerical garb, or to present himself publicly as a member of the clergy.*

b) It is the intent of this Policy that after there has been a determination of even a single Actionable occurrence of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Disabled Adults, Elder Persons, or Residents, the accused member of the clergy or Religious will not remain in active ministry and will not receive a future assignment.

12.3 a) If the accused person is an Archdiocesan clergy or Religious and a determination is made that an allegation of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Disabled Adults, Elder Persons, or Residents is Actionable or that the accused person is unfit for ministry, the Archbishop may refer him to a facility for comprehensive medical and psychological evaluations and intervention, if possible, so long as this does not interfere with any investigation by state or federal civil and criminal authorities. If the accused person refuses such referral, the Archbishop shall take appropriate steps in accordance with Canon Law to enforce his decision.

b) If the accused person is a Religious and the Archbishop determines that the allegation is Actionable, a decision as to rehabilitation will be made by his or her religious superior.

12.4 The Archbishop shall consult with the Advisory Board with respect to the imposition of sanctions and remedial actions under this section if the accused person is clergy or Religious.

12.5 In every case involving clergy or Religious who are subject to Canon law, the processes and sanctions as provided for in Canon Law will be observed and in the event of an irreconcilable conflict between the applicable provision of Canon Law and this Policy, the provisions of Canon Law will prevail. The necessary observance of canonical norms internal to the Church is not intended to hinder the course of any civil or criminal action.

## **Policy Concerning Disabled Adult and Elder Person Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation**

12.6 Church Personnel who fail to comply with the provisions of this Policy will be subject to actions by the Archdiocese as may be deemed necessary up to and including termination from any positions with the Archdiocese and/or with any parish, mission or other Catholic institutions and organizations which are subject to the administration, authority, or governance of the Archdiocese in accordance with civil, criminal and Canon Law. Applicants for positions with the Archdiocese who fail to comply with the provisions of this policy, as applicable, will be denied such positions.

### **Appendix 1**

Definitions of Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation are defined as above in the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.) Section 16-5-100.



# Social Media Policy

## Background and Introduction

The new communications media, if adequately understood and exploited, can offer priests and all pastoral care workers a wealth of data which was difficult to access before, and facilitate forms of collaboration and increased communion that were previously unthinkable. If wisely used, with the help of experts in technology and the communications culture, the new media can become—for priests and for all pastoral care workers—a valid and effective instrument for authentic and profound evangelization and communion.”

Pope Benedict XVI, *The Priest and Pastoral Ministry in a Digital World: New Media at the Service of the Word* -Message for the 2010 World Communications Day

Church leaders, including Pope Benedict XVI have articulated the clear need to use new technologies to express the Word of God to all people in all generations. The Archdiocese of Atlanta recognizes the powerful tool electronic media can be to evangelize and educate all people. In order to ensure electronic communication on the internet is appropriate, effective and reflective of our Catholic values, and consistent with the rules and values of our workplace, the Archdiocese of Atlanta has established the following policies. These policies are in addition to and complement existing policies regarding the use of electronic communications which collectively serve to share the Good News in a way that creates a safe environment for all vulnerable populations.

## Definition of Social Media

Any web-based and mobile technologies which are designed to turn communication into interactive dialogue. This includes, but is not limited to the use of blogs/wikis, message boards/forums, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.

## Establishing A Social Media Presence

It is important to remember online content is visible to anyone in the world so one must always be mindful about the nature of the information posted. Content should consistently represent the views and teachings of the Catholic Church.

- Approval from the department head/pastor/principal is needed before seeking permission to establish a new site or account from the Archdiocesan, parish or school webmaster.

## Social Media Policy

- Once granted, the new site (e.g. word press blog or Facebook page) should contain the official Archdiocesan logo or standard approved images used for the Archdiocese of Atlanta and/or its entities (parishes, schools and agencies).
- A minimum of two adult individuals within the archdiocesan department and/or its entities should have full administrative access to the account (no minors should be granted administrative privileges). These individuals should be registered and have email alerts of any page activity sent to their Archdiocesan assigned email account (this allows for a quicker response time to urgent requests and helps to ensure that all postings are appropriate).
- Official sites should contain no personal views, photos, or personal information of the administrator and staff. Administrators should establish separate sites and pages for personal and professional use (*please review section on personal use of social networking sites below for more information*).
- Personal pages and information should be neither advertised nor accessible to young people. In addition, do not link personal accounts to your work accounts (Ex. A post on your personal Twitter account appearing on your professional LinkedIn profile).
- Written permission must be obtained prior to posting photographs, or other identifying information, of minors/young people on websites and we recommend only using the individual's first name in the caption.
- Post the following "**rules of conduct**" established by USCCB for visitors to their Facebook site: "All posts and comments should be marked by Christian charity and respect for truth. They should be on topic and presume the good will of other posters. Discussion should take place primarily from a faith perspective. No ads please."
- This online "**rules of conduct**" should be in sync with Archdiocesan codes of conduct for other areas, such as the standards for protection of children and young adults.

### **General "Rules of the Road" for the Administrator (once site has been established)**

- Stick to your ministry and do not claim to represent the official position of the Church unless authorized to do so. Be honest, professional and clear as to who you are and the ministry you represent.
- Avoid engaging in any postings/communications that could be misconstrued or misinterpreted.
- Respect the Archdiocese, coworkers and audience. Do not post information about any of these entities that should be kept confidential.
- All comments should be respectful, on topic and void of personal information. You have the right and ability to block/delete those that are potentially libelous, disrespectful or contrary to church teaching.
- Prior to posting make sure you are following all copyright and fair use laws. Always attribute photos, quotes, information to original source/author.
- Create summary of reports to determine success of messages and effectiveness of your site. Be able to answer questions like who is the audience and are they engaged in this forum(s).
- For more suggestions on establishing social media guidelines, consult USCCB's website:

## Social Media Policy

<http://www.usccb.org/about/communications/social-media-guidelines.cfm>

- For specific guidelines related to social networking with minors, please review our separate policy.

### Guidelines for the Use of Social Networking Sites with Minors

The Archdiocese of Atlanta recognizes the various ways, both positive and negative, that technology and social media can be used. It is important that technology be used in a responsible and ethical way and that Archdiocesan staff, volunteers and parents be transparent in all forms of communication, particularly when ministering to young persons. Social networking sites should be used for ministry and education rather than for befriending people or socializing. Parents must have access to everything provided to their children. For example, parents should be made aware of how social media are being used, be told how to access the sites, and be given the opportunity to be copied on all material sent to their children via social networking (including text messages). While parents should be provided with the same material as their children, it does not have to be via the same technology (that is, if children receive a reminder via Twitter, parents can receive it in a printed form or by an e-mail list).

After receiving written parental permission to communicate with young people via social media, Archdiocesan employees should be encouraged to save copies of conversations whenever possible, especially those that concern the personal sharing of a teen or young adult. (This may be especially important with email and text messaging.)

Make everyone aware of the [Children's Online Privacy Protection Act](#), which is federal legislation that oversees how websites interact with children under age 13.

*SOURCE: USCCB Social Media Guidelines*

### Guidelines:

- Written permission must be obtained prior to posting photographs, or other identifying information, of minors/young people on websites. When posting photographs of minors/young people, it is advisable to caption the photographs using only the individuals' first name.
- The site administrator is an adult considered to be working with minor and thus should have completed all safe environment requirements per the Archdiocesan policy.
- Parents should be informed that a social networking site is being utilized as a standard part of youth ministry and any materials posted on the site must also be available through other communication mediums.
- There is a difference between initiating a "friend request" and accepting one. Friend/connection requests should be initiated by the young people, not the adult representative of the Archdiocese of Atlanta and/or its entities.

## Social Media Policy

- In photographs of youth activities, youth should not be “tagged,” or identified by name in the photograph.
- On the original social networking site, it is recommended that the “no tagging” option be set.
- Because of the potential of teen crises or time relevant information, any pages with high volumes of youth involvement should be monitored frequently by official organizational personnel. A plea for help that goes unanswered can be damaging to the parish, school, and/or organization and dangerous for teens and their families.
- It is recommended that clear guidelines or parameters be established with regard to times of communication between adults and young people. While young people may be on the phone/texting in the late evening hours, those who minister with young people should pre-determine a timeframe when it is too late to take a professional call, except in the case of serious urgency.
- All Archdiocesan employees must maintain separate personal and ministry based social media accounts to ensure that any information posted on one’s personal account is not made available to young people.
- If youth are to engage in blogging as a part of an officially sanctioned organizational activity; such activity must be monitored by at least 2 adults, no youth should be identified by name or other personal information, and the content of such a blog must be in compliance with Catholic Church teaching and values.

*ADAPTED FROM: The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry*

### Personal Use of Social Networking Sites

The Archdiocese of Atlanta respects the right of employees, volunteers and independent contractors to create and maintain personal social networking websites.

Employees, Volunteers and Independent Contractors who choose to identify his or her affiliation with the Archdiocese of Atlanta and/or its entities (parishes, schools and agencies) on personal social networking websites may be seen by their readers as a representative of the Archdiocese of Atlanta. As a result, Employees, Volunteers and Independent Contractors must adhere to the following guidelines:

- **Under no circumstances should confidential, privileged or private matters relating to the Archdiocese of Atlanta and its affiliates be addressed.** This would also include (but not limited to) the advertisement of archdiocesan, school or parish sponsored events and activities.
- **Always include a Disclaimer.** Please add a notice to your personal website that clearly communicates to your readers that the comments or views you chose to share do not reflect the views of the Archdiocese of Atlanta.

## Social Media Policy

- **Adhere to the Confidentiality Policy.** Employees, Volunteers and Independent Contractors must maintain the confidentiality of the Archdiocese of Atlanta and its entities at all times.
- **Be mindful of time spent on personal websites during your normal scheduled working hours.** All time spent on personal social networking websites should be spent on your personal time. Time spent on personal networking websites should not interfere with an employee's job performance. Do not use the Archdiocese of Atlanta e-mail addresses to register on social networking sites, blogs or other online tools utilized for personal use.
- **Respect all of our workplace policies and procedures at all times, even on social networking sites.**
- **Adhere to Archdiocese policies.** Policies regarding workplace conduct in our churches, offices and schools also apply to online activities. Inappropriate postings that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment or threats of violence will not be tolerated.
- **Be mindful that the information posted on your personal social networking site, or on other social networking sites could potentially be grounds for discipline or possible termination of employment.**
- **Consult the Human Resources Department of the Archdiocese of Atlanta for more information.**

### Acknowledgements

Compiled by the Communications Department of the Archdiocese of Atlanta, utilizing the policies and guidelines of USCCB, the Diocese of Salt Lake City, Orlando and the Archdiocese of St. Louis.



## **MANDATORY SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING FOR ADULTS WHO HAVE CONTACT WITH CHILDREN AND/OR VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS**

### *VIRTUS PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN*

The Archdiocese of Atlanta has adopted the VIRTUS program, [\*Protecting God's Children \(PGC\)\*](#), effective January 2016 as the new Safe Environment training for adults. Maximizing a church's role as a child-safe environment begins with making adults more aware of the ways children and adults interact with each other. The Protecting God's Children program educates and trains adults (clergy, religious, teachers, staff, volunteers, and parents) about the dangers of abuse, the warning signs of abuse, the ways to prevent abuse, the methods of properly reporting suspicions of abuse, and responding to allegations of abuse.

All VIRTUS training programs, including the [\*Protecting God's Children \(PGC\)\*](#) program, are comprehensive and multi-dimensional – incorporating proven best practice standards for the prevention of child sexual abuse by clergy, staff, volunteers, and others who interact with children within the church environment. VIRTUS training programs incorporate instructor-led training, train-the-facilitator education, awareness videos, and ongoing web-based training through online training bulletins and training modules via our VIRTUS Online system.

Training adults in our Archdiocese is an important part of our commitment to our sacred duty to protect the most vulnerable among us.

The Protecting God's Children training is about 3 hours in length. No one under the age of 18 will be allowed to attend the session. Please make sure to pre-register to attend a session near you by visiting the link below:

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the Safe Environment office at 404-920-7550 or via email to [SEsupport@archatl.com](mailto:SEsupport@archatl.com).

**[CLICK HERE TO PRE-REGISTER FOR VIRTUS PGC  
TRAINING](#)**



## Acknowledgment of Receipt and Compliance Safe Environment Standards of Conduct Archdiocese of Atlanta



The Archdiocese of Atlanta (“Archdiocese”) has adopted polices and standards of conduct as an integral part of its Safe Environment program. These policies and standards of conduct are contained in the Archdiocese’s Safe Environment booklet incorporating each of the following:

- Sexual Abuse Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Ministerial Standards for Adults Who Have Regular Contact with Children and/or Vulnerable Individuals
- Policy concerning the Protection of Disabled Adults and Elder Persons
- Social Media Policy

By signing below, I hereby acknowledge that I have received information on how to find a copy of the Safe Environment policy booklet in the Archdiocesan website and that I have read the booklet in its entirety, including each of the policies and standards of conduct described above, and I agree to conduct myself in full compliance with all Safe Environment policies and standards of conduct stated in the Safe Environment booklet and as may be adopted by the Archdiocese in the future. This also confirms that I will attend a [VIRTUS Protecting God’s Children training](#) before I begin paid or volunteer work for the Archdiocese of Atlanta or within 60 days of my scheduled start date. I understand that the Archdiocese shall rely on this signed Acknowledgment of Receipt and Compliance to ensure my acceptance and full agreement with all said Safe Environment policies and standards. This signed Acknowledgment will be maintained in my personnel file.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

[Please type or print]

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish/School/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check one:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Priest                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Employee               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Order Priest                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Independent Contractor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deacon                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Brother or Sister               |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seminarian                                |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aspirant/Candidate to Permanent Diaconate |   |