

Sexual Misconduct Policy

Prohibition Against Sexual Misconduct

The Diocese of Rhode Island does not tolerate sexual misconduct in any form. The Diocese reaffirms the principle that employees as well as members have the right to be free from sexual misconduct including sexual harassment. Sexual misconduct includes the development or attempted development of a sexual relationship between a person in any ministerial position, lay or ordained, and an individual with whom he or she has a Pastoral Relationship. Any behavior determined to be sexual misconduct will result in appropriate disciplinary action which may include for employees, termination of employment; for clergy, it may include a Pastoral Direction, remedial counseling or deposition under Title IV of the Canons of the Episcopal Church; and for laity it may include termination of any ministerial roles.

A Pastoral Relationship is a relationship between any clergy person and any person:

1. who attends a congregation or other ministry setting in which the clergy person serves, or
2. who seeks ministry from the clergy person

A Pastoral Relationship is a relationship between the ministers licensed under Canon III.4 and those they serve in the course of these ministries. This includes Pastoral Leaders, Worship Leaders, Preachers, Eucharistic Visitors, Evangelists and Catechists.

A Pastoral Relationship is a relationship between any duly-appointed lay person, whether employee or volunteer, who is authorized to provide and does provide:

1. counseling or pastoral care;
2. spiritual direction or spiritual guidance;
3. ministration of any Sacrament or Sacramental Rite (other than the distribution of the Bread and Wine by a lay person at a public service of Holy Communion);
4. life/leadership/peer coaching;
5. hearing a person's confession, in the course of the duly-authorized ministry

Sexual misconduct includes but is not limited to the following actions:

1. Verbal: such as sexual innuendo, indecent proposals, sharing sexual stories, jokes or fantasies, or making inappropriate comments about someone's appearance.
2. Behaviors: such as inappropriate touching (hugging, tickling, kissing), sending or posting communications with sexual content (correspondence, email, text messages, instant messages, photographs, attachments, phone conversations, voice mail, etc.), stalking, staring inappropriately. Sexual abuse is any sexual behavior at the request of, acquiesced to or by a person under eighteen years of age, in high school or legally incompetent.
3. Sexualizing a Pastoral Relationship or relationship between a clergy or lay person and anyone to whom he or she provides ministry (e.g., requesting dates, giving unwanted attention, one-on-one meetings outside of regular hours or places)

This policy applies to the following persons

1. All clergy whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, or otherwise who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All paid personnel whether employed in areas of ministry or other kinds of services by the diocese, its congregations, schools or other agencies.
3. Those who contract their services to the diocese, its congregations, schools, or other agencies.
4. Volunteers engaged in a pastoral relationship (see above), exercising a leadership role or offering a ministry or service on behalf of the church.
5. The following ministers licensed under Canon III.4: Pastoral Leaders, Worship Leaders, Preachers, Eucharistic Visitors, and Catechists.
6. All persons who supervise persons who have pastoral relationships.
7. All members of decision-making bodies who have the authority to approve the creation of ministries, programs, church activities, or policies involving pastoral relationships.
8. All members of governing boards such as Standing Committees, Diocesan Councils/Executive Boards, Vestries, and Bishop's Committees, Boards of Directors for Schools, and the like.

Reporting Suspected Sexual Misconduct

ALL persons in Rhode Island are required by law ([RIGL 40-11-3](#)) to report known or suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families within 24 hours of becoming aware of such abuse/neglect. Call the Hotline at 1-800-RI-CHILD (1-800-742-4453) to report child abuse and/or neglect. In the case of a report of child/youth abuse where the victim is now an adult, the RI State Police may be contacted.

If you believe that you or another adult has been subjected to sexual misconduct, actions that violate this policy or inappropriate behavior, you may make your concerns known to the offending person if you are comfortable doing so, or you may report your concerns in accordance with the following.

Church personnel and those who have a supervisory or decision-making role (Vestry, Bishop's Committee, diocesan governing bodies, school boards, etc.) are required to report any suspected or known policy violations. Reports of suspected or known sexual misconduct may be reported to:

- The rector/clergy person in charge of the congregation
- The Senior Warden of the congregation
- The Bishop
- Canon to the Ordinary
- Diocesan Intake Officer(s)

APPROVED BY DIOCESAN COUNCIL DECEMBER 2015