

# The Catholic Archdiocese of Suva

## Code of Conduct for Working and Ministering with Minors

### Introduction

The Catholic Archdiocese of Suva (**Archdiocese**), together with our community, is responsible for creating a safe and nurturing environment for children and young people. For the purpose of this Code, any reference to 'minors' should be considered to include any person up to the age of 18 years (0 – 17 years). **Please Note:** See below 'Definitions' for the Fijian legal definitions of a Child and a Minor.

This Code of Conduct for Working with Children (**Code**) seeks to raise awareness amongst those persons working with children in the Archdiocese about their obligations under child protection legislation, and also assist them to create a child-safe environment for children to engage with the Catholic Church.

This Code provides persons working with children a better understanding of how to carry out the important pastoral work of the Catholic Church in a professional, supportive and nurturing way that both protects children from harm and contributes to their development.

The Code applies to all parishes and agencies of the Archdiocese of Suva including Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese.

This Code is to be used in conjunction with the *Policy Statement for Ministry to Minors for the Archdiocese of Suva, Expectations and Guidelines for Ministry to Minors* outlining the Do's and Don'ts of appropriate behavioural expectations when working with children in the Archdiocese and the *Guidelines for Pastoral Counseling of Minors*.

### Definitions

**Child** or **children** means a person who is under the age of 18 years (*Republic of Fiji Islands Child Welfare Decree 2010*).

**Ill-treatment** occurs when a person treats a child in an unreasonable and serious inappropriate, improper, inhumane or cruel manner.

**Minor** means a person who is under the age of 21 years under Fijian legislation. In this Code a minor means a person who is under the age of 18 years.

**Neglect** occurs when a child is harmed by the failure of a person who cares for them to provide basic physical and emotional necessities including food, shelter, clothing or medical attention.

**Psychological harm** means conduct that is obviously or very clearly unreasonable and results in significant emotional harm or trauma to a child.

**Sexual offence or other sexual misconduct** means any conduct of a sexual nature with a child, including crossing professional boundaries and sexually explicit comments and other overtly sexual behaviour.

**Supervisor** means the employer or person who otherwise engages or appoints the person signing this Code to work with children, usually a Parish Priest (or administrator) or educational head (school principal).

**Working with children** means when working with children in the capacity of an Archdiocese employee, volunteer or religious appointee, whether that work takes place on Archdiocesan premises or elsewhere.

### **Code of Conduct**

#### *Compliance with child protection legislation and manuals*

1. At any time prior or during my appointment to a child-related role at the Archdiocese, I will provide the person employing, engaging or otherwise appointing me with any information that is relevant to determining whether I am suitable to work with children.
2. I will take the steps outlined in the Archdiocese's child protection guidelines if I suspect a:
  - a. person has engaged in any inappropriate conduct with a child; and/or
  - b. child is suffering as a result of physical abuse, a sexual offence or other sexual misconduct, ill-treatment, neglect, psychological harm or is otherwise at risk of harm, either in the Archdiocese environment, at home or elsewhere,

and I acknowledge these matters may be reportable to the Fiji Police, and/or the Permanent Secretary for Women and Social Welfare.

3. I will immediately notify my supervisor if I am charged with any criminal offence.

#### *Care, respect and compassion*

4. I will always treat children with care, respect and compassion, even if they behave in a way that is difficult or challenging.
5. I will always use appropriate, respectful language, and not speak to children in a sarcastic, derogatory or offensive manner, acknowledging I hold a position of authority and use of this language could negatively affect the wellbeing and development of these children I work with.
6. I will always treat children in an equal and consistent way, and avoid favouritism, "special relationships" with certain children and/or singling particular children out.
7. I will never provide gifts to one child over another child and I will only provide gifts where those gifts are appropriate given the child's age and circumstances, eg gifts that are inexpensive and inoffensive.

#### *Proper supervision of children*

8. I will always diligently supervise all children I am responsible for, or arrange for appropriate additional supervision, including on excursions and overnight camps.
9. I will always ensure that children are adequately protected from potential dangers such as motor vehicles and outdoor risks such as sun exposure and unsafe bodies of water. I will also ensure that children in my care are not placed at risk as a consequence of unsupervised or prolonged contact with strangers.

10. I will always be punctual in attending to my appointments with children and I will always ensure I advise my supervisor if I am unable to attend my appointments with children.
11. I will always take care in planning activities for children to make sure they are appropriate given the children's age and other needs.

*Disciplining children*

12. I acknowledge that in appropriate circumstances, discipline is necessary to prevent future misbehaviour by children, including misbehaviour that places the child and others at risk.
13. If I am required to discipline a child, I will only do so in a reasonable manner that is proportionate to their misbehaviour and does not isolate or degrade the child. I will always explain to the child why he or she is being disciplined.
14. I will never use corporal punishment to discipline a child.

*Contact with children*

15. I will avoid situations where I am alone with a child. If my work requires me to have one-on-one contact with a child, I will ensure the child's parent or guardian has given their consent.
16. I will always try to use oral directions with children and will not have any physical contact with a child unless it is necessary:
  - a. as a reasonable restraint to protect the child, other children or adults from harm;
  - b. to attract their attention or guide them in a particular direction; or
  - c. to comfort a child who is distressed.
17. I will not under any circumstances touch or behave with children that I am supervising in an overly personal, intimate or sexual way.
18. I will not visit or otherwise contact a child out of hours except with their parent or guardian's consent.
19. If a child's parent wishes to engage me to mentor, tutor or care for their child outside of my work at the Archdiocese, I:
  - a. do so in my individual capacity only and not in conjunction with the Archdiocese; and
  - b. must disclose this to my supervisor.

*Use of social media and other technology to communicate with children*

20. I will comply with the Archdiocese's child protection manuals in relation to the use of social media and other technology, which provide that amongst other things I must:
  - a. be respectful, polite and considerate in all communications with children and communicate in a manner that is consistent with my role and responsibility within or in relation to the Archdiocese;

- b. not invite or accept invitations from children I have met through the Archdiocese as “friends” on my personal social media site, or otherwise interact with them on that site; and
- c. not communicate with a child on a one-on-one basis by phone or email without the express written consent of their parent or guardian.

***Please see the Archdiocese’s guidelines for a complete list of obligations.***

*Use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs*

21. I will comply with the Archdiocese’s child protection manuals in relation to the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, which provide that:
- a. I must never give or provide alcohol, tobacco or other drugs to children, unless I am a Priest providing a child with sacramental wine during Holy Communion as provided for in the Archdiocese’s child protection manuals;
  - b. I must never perform work with children when I am under the influence of alcohol, tobacco or illicit drugs, and will inform my supervisor if I am under the influence of any prescription medication that may adversely affect my capacity to effectively supervise children and keep them safe; and
  - c. if I am supervising children at an overnight camp or excursion where children are present, I will not consume alcohol, tobacco or illicit drugs when I am on duty or otherwise in the presence of children.

***Please see the Archdiocese’s guidelines for a complete list of obligations.***

*Medication*

22. I will never administer any medication to any child without their parent or guardian’s consent.

*Material involving children*

23. I will always obtain the permission of a child or young person’s parent or guardian before taking or using the child or young person’s name or image in any report, website or other publication.

In a school setting I will always seek the permission of the school before taking or using the child or young person’s name or image in any report, website or other publication.

If suitable, I will also gain the permission of the young person to take or use their image in any report, website or other publication.

24. I will not possess, distribute or produce any material that depicts or describes children in an offensive way.

**Acknowledgement**

I acknowledge I have read and will comply with this Code of Conduct.

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

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