

Harassment Policy

Harassment can take many forms. Harassment can occur at any parish activity, and/or can take place in classrooms, halls, cafeterias, gymnasiums, or even at programs sponsored by the Parish at other locations. It does not include compliments of a socially acceptable nature.

Harassment is verbal or physical conduct that embarrasses, denigrates, or shows hostility toward a person because of his/her race, color, religion, gender, sex, national origin, age or disability or other protected characteristics.

It is policy of the Diocese of Columbus to maintain a spiritually enriching environment, in all programs, and activities, free of all forms of harassment and intimidations. No participant, volunteer adult leader, or Parish/School staff member-male or female-should be subject to unlawful harassment in any form, and specifically not to unsolicited and/or unwelcome sexual overtures or conduct, either verbal or physical.

Conduct which constitutes sexual harassment is prohibited. Sexually harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Offensive sexual flirtations, advances, propositions;
- Continued or repeated verbal abuse of sexual or gender-based nature;
- Explicit or degrading sexual or gender-based comments about another individual or his or her appearance;
- The display or circulation of sexually explicit or suggestive writing, pictures or objects;
- Any offensive or physical conduct which shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of gender or sex;
- Graffiti of a sexual nature;
- Fondling oneself sexually or talking about one's sexual activity in front of others;
- Spreading rumors about or categorizing others as to sexual activity.

Sexual harassment is not limited to conduct that is sexual in nature—it also includes harassment that is based on **gender**. Gender-based harassment, which is also prohibited, is conduct that would not occur except for the sex of the person involved. An example would be referring to a woman by or as a female body part, or using sex-based term, or treating people differently because of their gender. The same prohibitions apply with regard to inflammatory or offensive comments or conduct which are based upon race, color, age, religion, disability, or national origin. In short, working relationships between employees and volunteers must be based on mutual respect.

Sexual harassment also includes the taking of, or refusal to take, any personnel or other action on the basis of a person's submission to or refusal of sexual overtures. No person should so much as imply that an individual's "cooperation" or submission to unwelcome sexual activity will have an effect on individual's employment, assignment, compensation, advancement,

development, program evaluation, participation in parish programs or activities, or any other condition of employment or achievement.

Not all physical conduct is necessarily considered sexual in nature. (For example, a catechetical leader hugging a child after an accomplishment, a catechist consoling an adolescent with an injury, or physical conduct during an activity to enhance catechetical learning like engaging in movement to accompany liturgical music, would not be considered sexual conduct.) However, peer-based sexual harassment is a form of prohibited conduct where the harassing conduct creates a hostile environment.

A sexual hostile environment can be created by a parish employee, volunteer, participant, or visitor to the parish activity.

A person who believes that he/she is subject to unlawful harassment or intimidation must contact the (a) program administrator, (b) pastor, or (c) diocesan director of religious education. A complaint must be filed in writing. In the event that an individual alleges harassment by a program administrator or a pastor, the individual may file the complaint with the diocesan director of religious education. All complaints will be promptly investigated, and the person initiating the complaint will be advised of the outcome of the investigation.

Where it is determined that harassment has occurred, the appropriate authority will take immediate disciplinary action against any program administrator, volunteer, or staff engaging in harassment. The response shall take into account the individuals and circumstances. Such action may include, depending on the circumstances, disciplinary measures up to and including termination of services.

No retaliation against anyone who reports harassment will be tolerated. The Diocese prohibits such retaliation and will take appropriate responsive action if retaliation occurs.

HARRASSMENT
POLICY VERIFICATION
FORM

I, _____
Please print your name

(Please indicate)

- An employee of
 - A volunteer at
 - A parent/guardian of a youth participant
 - A youth participant (grades 6-12)
- have received copies of the diocesan policy on harassment.

I understand that it is necessary that any complaint of harassment must be filed with the (a) program administrator, (b) pastor or (c) diocesan director of religious education. I have had an opportunity to read the policy and am confident I understand the content and purpose.

Parish and program

Signature

Date