

# The Archdiocese of Winnipeg Policy for Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

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This policy is our Church's response to the need to protect those most vulnerable in our church and our society. In our society and indeed in the church itself, sad experience has shown the need for vigilance and awareness to provide safe space and practices, so all may feel and be at peace in a safe environment.

This policy strives in a pro-active way to promote protection for:

- ❖ Children, youth and vulnerable adults;
- ❖ The ministries provided and those who minister: clergy, employees and church volunteers.

The Archdiocese of Winnipeg expects those who minister in the name of the church or under church auspices will exhibit a profound respect for all. First respecting the law of the Gospel, the Archdiocese also respects and abides by the laws of our civil society.

The Archdiocese of Winnipeg wishes to provide a safe, secure and respectful environment for all persons partaking in church activities. Trusting in the good will of all, this policy applies to all employees and volunteers involved with children, youth and vulnerable adults. It is the responsibility of the pastors, Safe Environment Coordinators and the Director of Human Resources of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg to inform all of these employees and volunteers of this policy, who then must ensure that this policy is put into effect in their particular ministries or services. The goal is the prevention of abuse and the elimination of potentially compromising circumstances in order to protect children, youth and vulnerable adults.

## **Definitions**

### **Vulnerable Persons**

A vulnerable person is anyone of any age or gender who may easily be exploited by another. This would include children, youth and some adults. These people are at a disadvantage as they may be unable to fully protect themselves due to age, disability, or personal circumstances (such as emotional distress due to crisis or trauma).

They may have personal handicaps and could be:

- ❖ Cognitively challenged
- ❖ Emotionally susceptible
- ❖ Physically challenged

Others may be socially isolated, and

- ❖ Desperately in need, socially or materially
- ❖ Lack the ability to communicate adequately because of speech or hearing difficulties
- ❖ Have an inability to understand, speak and read the language in use
- ❖ Living in fear, real or perceived
- ❖ In fear or awe of certain roles or authority figures

While not an exhaustive description, a vulnerable person is one who has difficulty protecting him or herself from harm either temporarily or permanently.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is any unwanted or inappropriate sexual conduct or language with others. This conduct may entail unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favours, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Harassment may be interpreted as the behaviour the victim perceives as offensive.

Harassment is contrary to the basic respect due to all persons. Victims may be employees or others who feel obliged to continue in their present circumstance. Perpetrators are often the ones in power and may or may not be aware of their abuse of power and the discomfort it causes the victim.

The Archdiocese of Winnipeg will not tolerate sexual harassment. Employees, volunteers and parishioners should feel secure and respected at all church activities. In a spirit of common mission, all involved in the church must be alert to even the beginnings of harassment, and eliminate it.

## **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse is comprised of contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used as an object for the sexual gratification of the adult. A child is abused whether or not this activity involves explicit force, whether or not it involves genital or physical contact, whether or not it is initiated by the child, and whether or not there is a discernible harmful outcome. In the context of this policy, the Archdiocese of Winnipeg would apply the term equally when the victim is any vulnerable person.

## **Grooming**

The vulnerable may be particularly susceptible to a process referred to as grooming.

Grooming includes a wide variety of behaviours designed to establish a special bond of trust and affectionate understanding between the groomer and the person who is the object of his or her attention. Examples of this may be spending large amounts of time with a particular person, affording special privileges, or providing gifts, trips and other expressions of special attention. Grooming behaviour can also lead the person to feel indebted to the groomer for these kindnesses. Once this bond of trust and indebtedness is established, the stage may be set for sexual advances.

Because the pattern of a groomer is made up of observable behaviours, these behaviours need to be challenged or reported. Grooming, whether intentional or not, is by its very nature seductive behaviour. As well as being a signal of possible abusive behaviour, grooming is in itself inappropriate. Everyone must be alert to signs of grooming in all church related activities involving the vulnerable.

## **Code of Conduct for Those Who Minister To All Vulnerable Persons**

1. All volunteers and church employees eighteen years and older involved with vulnerable persons must read and agree to abide by all Archdiocese of Winnipeg Safe Environment policies and protocols. A signed Acknowledgement Form (Appendix #1) must be completed to show they have read, understood and agree to abide by these policies.

The Archdiocese of Winnipeg Safe Environment policies include:

- a) This document, **The Archdiocese of Winnipeg Policy for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults** which includes **The Archdiocesan Response to a Complaint of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Volunteers or Employees**
- b) **The Archdiocese of Winnipeg Protocol On the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Members of the Clergy & The Pastoral Response to Abuse Complaints.**

A copy of this signed Acknowledgement Form must be submitted to the pastor or Safe Environment Coordinator and kept in a confidential file in the parish office.

2. All volunteers and church employees eighteen years and older involved with vulnerable persons (children, youth, vulnerable adults) are obligated to have a Criminal Record Search and a Child Abuse Registry Check. These record checks are to be submitted to the Parish Safe Environment Coordinator and kept in a confidential file in the parish office. A copy of both of these checks should also be sent to the Director of Human Resources at the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, Catholic Centre. Registry checks are valid for five years.

3. All new volunteers and new employees eighteen years and older involved with vulnerable persons (children, youth or vulnerable adults) must fill out an application form and submit the name and contact information for a minimum of two references. A minimum of two reference checks must be completed prior to employees or volunteers beginning their employment or ministry work. Copies of this documentation must be kept in a confidential file in the parish office. A Reference Check template and Application Form template can be found in the Appendix section (#2 & #3).
4. Two adults, unrelated to each other, should be present when involved with all vulnerable persons (children, youth or vulnerable adults). In instances where two unrelated adults are not present, doors to classrooms and meeting rooms must remain open or a window providing clear visibility into the room is required.
5. Appropriate child, youth, vulnerable adult–adult physical boundaries are to be respected at all times. Physical contact between adults and children, youth or vulnerable adults must occur in public. Any sexual attention towards a child, youth or vulnerable adult is strictly forbidden (this can include jokes or comments).
6. Qualified adults must be present and monitor the leadership techniques used by junior catechists and youth leaders to ensure that Archdiocese of Winnipeg policies are followed. A qualified adult is defined as a person who has been approved to work with children, youth and vulnerable adults by heads of the Archdiocesan office, pastors or Safe Environment Coordinators.
7. Each parish or Archdiocesan office must provide adequate adult supervision at all church sponsored youth activities. These activities could be as diverse as
  - ❖ Catechetical,
  - ❖ recreational,
  - ❖ devotional or
  - ❖ service projects.
8. There are to be no off-site activities with a child or group of children without the express permission of the parent, guardian and the appropriate pastor. A minimum of two adults, unrelated to each other, must be present at all off-site activities.
9. During overnight events no child is permitted to sleep in the same room as a teen or adult, other than with his or her own parent or guardian. However, adults and minors may share a large sleeping space (for example: a dormitory, classroom, or gym) if at least two qualified adults, not related to each other, are present at all times.
10. If help with toileting is required, permission must be given by the parent or guardian before toileting or changing help is given. Two adults, unrelated to each other, must be present if help with toileting is required.
11. Discipline of children and youth will be done constructively reflecting Christian values. Ridicule, shame, corporal punishment and abusive language are prohibited.
12. Hazing and harassment are prohibited in any church activity.
13. At all church sponsored events every effort must be taken to respect the privacy of children, youth and adults.
14. Scrupulous attention should be given to the confidentiality of personal information given by or about persons being ministered to.
15. As employees and volunteers are generally not qualified to counsel, counselling relationships are discouraged. Referral to professional assistance is recommended and should be done with the consultation of the pastor or Safe Environments Coordinator. Employees and volunteers should not delay in making referrals to suitable professionals as required.

16. All concerns regarding individuals not adhering to this code of conduct must be reported to the pastor and the parish Safe Environment Coordinator immediately. Where appropriate, the pastor and Safe Environment Coordinator will involve the Director of Human Resources of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg.

## **The Archdiocesan Response to a Complaint of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Volunteers or Employees**

### **Response to Abuse**

Any individual receiving a disclosure regarding abuse of a minor by an employee or volunteer of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, or any individual witnessing the abuse of a minor by an employee or volunteer of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, must immediately inform the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, Fr. Richard Arsenault or the Director of Human Resources of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, Laura Cumming, and file a report with Child and Family Services.

### **Contacts:**

Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg:  
Fr. Richard Arsenault at 204-452-2227 extension 239

Director of Human Resources of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg:  
Laura Cumming at 204-452-2227 extension 227 ([lcumming@archwinnipeg.ca](mailto:lcumming@archwinnipeg.ca))

Director of the Tribunal  
Jane Coyne at 204-452-2227

### **The Archdiocesan Response to a Complaint of Abuse**

All allegations of abuse of minors by employees or volunteers will be dealt with utilizing the **Archdiocese of Winnipeg Protocol on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Members of the Clergy & The Pastoral Response to Abuse Complaints** as a reference. The following principles will be recognized:

1. In the case of an allegation of abuse involving a person who is presently a minor, the Archdiocese will, according to the laws of Manitoba, immediately report the allegation to civil authorities. The report will include the name of the complainant and the name of the alleged offender. The complainant will be informed of this procedure and will be reminded of their obligation to report to civil authorities.
2. In cases where allegations have been reported to the proper civil authorities, such as police and child protection agencies, the Archdiocese will cooperate with the civil authorities in their investigation.
3. When an allegation of abuse of a minor by an employee has been received, the employee will be suspended pending the completion of the investigation. In the case of volunteers, the volunteer will be removed from situations where the problems could continue, pending the completion of any investigation.
4. The Archdiocese will respond and take immediate action if it receives an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor even if the abuse occurred long ago and the alleged victim is no longer a minor.
5. All complaints will be handled in confidence. The Archdiocese of Winnipeg will not disclose the identity of any parties involved, or the circumstances of the complaint, except where necessary for the purpose of investigation or corrective action, where required by law, or for the protection of individuals. Similarly, employees and volunteers interviewed as part of an investigation under this policy must treat all information in a confidential manner.

## **Safe Environments Roles and Responsibilities**

1. The office of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg's Director of Human Resources is responsible for providing support for ongoing education and assuring compliance of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg's Safe Environment policies.
2. The pastor in each parish in the Archdiocese of Winnipeg is responsible for naming a Safe Environment Coordinator. It is the responsibility of each pastor to provide the name and contact information of the Safe Environment Coordinator to the office of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg's Director of Human Resources.
3. All new volunteers and new employees who work with children, youth or the vulnerable must fill out an application form and submit the name and contact information for a minimum of two references. The Safe Environment Coordinator at each parish is responsible for assuring that a minimum of two reference checks have been completed prior to new employees or volunteers beginning their employment or ministry work. Documentation of the completed reference checks and the completed application form must be maintained in a confidential file in the parish office.
4. It is the responsibility of all new employees and volunteers 18 years of age and over who work with children, youth or the vulnerable to obtain and submit a current Child Abuse Registry Check and Criminal Record Search. A person with current completed checks (within the last year) may use these forms for the purpose of employment or for volunteer positions. These checks are valid for five years.

All existing employees and volunteers, who are not in possession of Child Abuse Registry and Criminal Record Search checks, are responsible to obtain and submit these checks to the Safe Environment Coordinator.

The Safe Environment Coordinator is to assure that the originals of these documents are received and kept in a confidential file in the parish office. A copy of these checks should be also sent to the Director of Human Resources office at the Catholic Centre.

5. The Safe Environment Coordinator is to provide orientation and information on the Archdiocese of Winnipeg's Safe Environment policies to all employees and volunteers who work with children, youth and the vulnerable. Refresher sessions are to be provided at a minimum of every two years. All employees and volunteers must sign the acknowledgement that they have read and understood these policies and must agree to abide by them. A copy of the signed acknowledgement is to be kept in a confidential file in the parish office.
6. It is the responsibility of the office of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg's Director of Human Resources to conduct an annual compliance review of the Safe Environment policies. It is the responsibility of the pastor and the Safe Environment Coordinator at each parish to provide all requested documentation as part of this review.
7. In all instances where there is any concern regarding a potential claim, it is the responsibility of the Director of Human Resources, through the office of the CFO of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, to notify the appropriate insurance carriers.