



ARCHDIOCESE OF MILWAUKEE
FITNESS FOR MINISTRY OVERSIGHT BOARD

I. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Those who minister within parishes, organizations, and institutions of the Church founded by Jesus Christ have the responsibility to exemplify Gospel teachings, values, and mandates in their lives, and in their actions. They must be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work, knowing that God's goodness and graces support them in their ministries. (Code of Ethical Standards, Archdiocese of Milwaukee)

Church ministers must be committed to establishing and maintaining a professional work environment, which is free from intimidation and harassment. Harassment can occur as the result of a single severe incident, or a pattern of conduct which results in the creation of a hostile, offensive, or intimidating work environment. Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical or verbal behavior, which can include, but is not limited to, the following: a. physical or mental abuse; b. racial insults; c. derogatory ethnic slurs, d. sexual advances or unwelcome touching; e. sexual comments or sexual jokes; f. requests for sexual favors used as a condition of employment, or affecting any personnel decision such as hiring, promotion, compensation, or termination. (Code of Ethical Standards, Archdiocese of Milwaukee)

All ministerial relationships within a church-related setting require that the highest ethical standards of conduct be maintained at all times and in all relevant areas. These include personal and professional interactions, program leadership, protection of privacy, and response to misconduct. (Code of Ethical Standards, Archdiocese of Milwaukee)

Church ministers must recognize that there is power inherent in their roles that may afford influence over another. They must be sensitive to that relative power and never use it inappropriately. Church ministers must protect the interests of those with lesser power. Sexualized interactions with persons who are served, or with whom one works, are never part of the ministerial role, and may incur reporting requirements for misconduct. Church ministers who have made a commitment to celibacy are called to witness this charism in all relationships. Likewise, those who have made a marital commitment are called to witness to this fidelity in all their relationships. (Code of Ethical Standards, Archdiocese of Milwaukee)

II. REPORTING MISCONDUCT

Please refer to the full Code of Ethical Standards and the Mandatory Reporting requirements when any misconduct involves a minor.

Anyone who observes or experiences violations of the Guiding Principles stated above has a right and responsibility to report such misconduct. If an individual believes that such violations are criminal offenses, they should make the report to civil authorities. Other reports about clergy misconduct are directed to the Vicar for Clergy. Reports about misconduct by lay ministers are directed to the Director

of Priest and Lay Ecclesial Personnel and Placement. Reports can also be made through an outside reporting agency, *Convercent*. Access to this reporting process is through the archdiocesan website, <https://www.archmil.org/report-misconduct>. When you “click” on the link Reporting Misconduct, you will be taken to this third party platform. Instructions there will walk you through the process of reporting.

Anyone who, in good faith, reports a violation of these ethical standards or who participates in good faith in any resulting investigation or proceeding shall not suffer harassment, retaliation, or adverse consequence. The archdiocese or parish will take disciplinary action (up to and including termination) against an employee who in its assessment and in violation of this policy has engaged in retaliatory conduct against a good faith reporter.

III. INVESTIGATING REPORTS OF MISCONDUCT

If civil authorities do not take up an investigation into the misconduct, there will be a thorough investigation of the allegations using an established process, including the Fitness for Ministry Oversight Board. The Fitness for Ministry Board has been established to review complaints about serious breaches of the Code of Ethical Standards.

The alleged misconduct will be reviewed by a team of Archdiocesan staff which includes those with expertise in the specific subject matter. Each case will have oversight by the Chancellor, Legal Counsel and Human Resources. This group will take the necessary steps to arrive at a compilation of facts in the case including, if needed, hiring an independent investigator.

The Archdiocese commits itself to full cooperation in this independent investigative process. If there is sufficient evidence or an admission, the independent investigator may not be needed. The Fitness for Ministry Oversight Board will review cases involving a serious breach of the Code of Ethical Standards. The Board is charged with making recommendations about the resolution of the matter. If it involves a cleric, the recommendation would be made to the Archbishop regarding the substantiation of the allegation and suitability for ministry. If the matter involves a lay employee, the recommendation would be directed to the person’s employer, be it a parish or school or other Catholic entity. If, during the investigation and review, it is determined that a canonical delict has occurred, proper canonical procedures will be observed including informing the Promoter of Justice.

IV. FITNESS FOR MINISTRY OVERSIGHT BOARD

The Fitness for Ministry Oversight Board consists of six members with additional members to be added upon recommendation of the Board. The Board members will be respected members of the community and have expertise in the areas of psychology, law, and/or public policy as well as ministerial experience. The board will include an experienced pastor. Members will be appointed for renewable five-year terms. The Director of the Office for Lay Ministry will serve as an *ex officio*, non-voting member of the Board. The Vicar for Clergy and/ or the Director of Priest and Lay Ecclesial Personnel and Placement and will be invited to attend meetings of the Board as necessary.

V. BOARD MEETINGS

The Fitness for Ministry Oversight Board will be convened whenever there is a report of ethical misconduct by clergy or a lay minister. Meetings of the Board are not considered public meetings and no announcement of meetings or reports to the general public or media will be made unless the Archbishop elects to do so through his Communications Office. The Chair of the Board will act as spokesperson as needed, but will not discuss the content of meetings or recommendations made to the Archbishop or other employer. Any Communication policy will be issued by the Archbishop through the archdiocesan communications vehicles. If at any meeting of the Board a quorum (a majority of the members) is not present, the members present will not make any recommendations on substantiation of an allegation nor suitability for ministry. The Board may direct investigators to conduct additional interviews to clarify or complete a line of inquiry developed in a particular instance. The Board does not meet personally with either the person making the allegation or the accused.

VI. ACTIONS OF THE BOARD

The Fitness for Ministry Oversight Board will exercise its responsibility by reviewing the report and making a recommendation on substantiation of an allegation and suitability for ministry. The Board may also request pursuing an additional investigation directing inquiry into new area(s).. The Board will review any documentary evidence or admission by the accused in arriving at its conclusion about whether or not the allegation has been substantiated and whether or not the accused is suitable for ministry. The Board will send its written report to the Archbishop or other employer for decision and action. The results of the investigation, along with the recommendation of the Board and the decision of the Archbishop or other employer, will be committed to writing and sent to each of the parties in a case.

Twice a year, the Fitness for Ministry Oversight Board will conduct reviews of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee's compliance with all Safe Environment and Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People requirements. The results of these reviews will be reported to the Archbishop, the Diocesan Review Board and the Safe Environment Coordinator.