

DIOCESE OF FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND

GUIDELINE IF AN EMPLOYEE (OR VOLUNTEER) IS ACCUSED OF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR OR A BOUNDARY VIOLATION WITH A MINOR

Purpose:

To provide pastors, principals and supervisors a guideline for use if an employee or volunteer, when the volunteer was working on behalf of the parish/school, is accused of inappropriate behavior involving a minor.

This procedure does not replace any obligation required by state or local laws. All suspected abuse of a minor must immediately be reported using the appropriate diocesan policy and procedure. Reports of suspected abuse may be investigated by the Department of Child Services.

School personnel should utilize policy P3630 Harassment Prohibition and Procedure for P 3630 or P4580 Harassment Prohibition and Procedure for P4580 rather than this guideline if applicable.

Background:

All diocesan employees and those with whom they interact, especially children, are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect. Supervisors, department heads and pastors are charged with the responsibility to ensure that all whom they supervise and serve are treated in a manner consistent with the religious and moral standards espoused by the Church and the diocese.

Scope:

1. These procedures apply to allegations of inappropriate behavior or boundary violations with a minor by an employee or volunteer working on behalf of the parish/school.
2. Such behavior includes but is not limited to inappropriate jokes, comments, insults, cartoons, innuendoes, and personal conduct.

Suggested Procedure:

1. The initial report of an allegation should be shared with the employee's/volunteer's supervisor who will in turn inform the pastor (and principal) if not previously informed.
2. The pastor/principal may seek assistance with any part of this procedure from the Vicar General of the diocese, the Victim Assistance Coordinator, or the Safe Environment Coordinator.
3. The pastor/principal/supervisor decides who will interview the person making the report. Two persons, on behalf of the parish/school, are to be present for this interview with at least one of

these persons the same gender as the alleged victim. If the person making the report is a minor, the minor's parents should be informed and may be present with the minor.

4. The accused employee/volunteer may be informed that an allegation has come forward, but the accuser's identity may not be shared unless permission is given by the accuser or if special circumstances warrant it.
5. Depending upon the seriousness of the allegation as learned in the initial report, the accused employee or volunteer may be placed on administrative leave or suspended from volunteer service.
6. After reviewing the information from the initial report, the pastor/principal/supervisor should conduct a thorough investigation. All persons interviewed should be asked for a detailed description of the incident, the specific dates, places, and other circumstances, including the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of others who may have knowledge pertinent to the incident(s). If the person making the initial report is not an alleged victim, discreet efforts shall be made to contact the alleged victim(s), or parent(s)/legal guardian(s) if a minor, with respect for the right of the alleged victim(s) to not engage or cooperate with these guidelines. The accused should be interviewed as part of the investigation.
7. All persons interviewed should be told that there will be no recriminations against any person making such a report in good faith.
8. All pertinent information shall be kept confidential to the fullest extent possible.
9. If during the investigation, information becomes available that the allegation is more serious and abuse is suspected, the supervisor should immediately report the incident using the appropriate diocesan policy and procedure.
10. After reviewing all the information from the investigation, the pastor/principal must determine the credibility of the allegation and appropriate corrective actions, if necessary.
11. If the allegation is credible, but not serious enough to warrant termination, the pastor/principal/supervisor should create a plan for the employee's or volunteer's development so that future inappropriate behavior will not occur. Other restrictions or measures may also be added to the employee's or volunteer's responsibilities to ensure the safety of minors.
12. If the accused is terminated and has a child (children) present in the school or at parish activities, the pastor may establish a plan which specifies how this parent may be present on the campus. The plan may be written with copies for both parties.
13. If the allegation is found to be not credible or not true, the pastor/principal should share the decision and reasoning with all persons interviewed as part of the investigation. The pastor/principal/supervisor may consult the accused as to how to assure the accused's reputation among the parish or school community is not harmed.
14. The pastor should inform the Vicar General of all credible allegations. The principal should inform the Superintendent of Schools of all credible allegations who will, in turn, inform the Vicar General.
15. The Vicar General may share all credible allegations with the bishop and the Diocesan Review Board.