

**Respecting Boundaries  
in  
Ministerial Relationships**

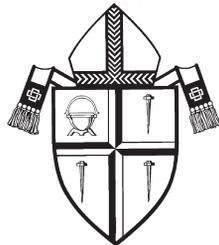


**SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

**Preventing**

**Responding**

**Reporting**



**Diocese of San Diego**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Diocese of San Diego makes this pamphlet available as part of our effort to prevent sexual misconduct by promoting respect for appropriate boundaries in ministerial relationships. We want also to explain how issues of sexual misconduct are addressed within our Church and to give information on how to report sexual misconduct that has occurred.

**Sexual misconduct** by clergy or other Church ministers **is never acceptable**. We recognize that it can have devastating consequences above all for victims and their families, but also for the Church ministers involved and for the Church community at large.

In ministry with God's people we must strive to create worship, educational and work environments where we all treat each other with dignity, charity and respect.

Our obligation to minister in healthy and holy relationships flows from the mission given to us by Jesus, in whose name we serve.

Sincerely in our Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert H. Brown". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Bishop of San Diego

## Sexual Misconduct in a Ministerial Relationship

A MINISTERIAL RELATIONSHIP is created whenever a person in his or her capacity as a Church official or leader interacts with another person. This applies to:

- clergy (bishops, priests, deacons)
- members of religious communities (priests, brothers, sisters)
- all lay Church ministers (employees and volunteers)
- spiritual directors and counselors
- school personnel
- seminary personnel
- coaches and camp leaders.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT is a general term that includes, but is not limited to, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

- Sexual harassment is sexualized language or conduct found to be unwelcome and offensive.
- Sexual exploitation is sexual conduct which violates a trust-relationship.
- Sexual abuse is sexual conduct between an adult and a minor or a “vulnerable adult” as defined by law.

*For examples of sexual misconduct always unacceptable in ministerial relationships see:*

[www.diocese-sdiego.org/examples.htm](http://www.diocese-sdiego.org/examples.htm)

## Preventing Sexual Misconduct

The Diocese of San Diego requires Church ministers to abide by its policies prohibiting sexual misconduct. The diocese also makes clear the procedures for dealing with incidents of sexual misconduct.

It is always the responsibility of Church ministers to respect and maintain the appropriate emotional and relational boundaries of those they serve or with whom they work. When Church ministers violate a ministerial relationship by any form of sexual misconduct they are taking advantage of the vulnerability of those who are seeking their ministry.

All candidates for the priesthood and permanent diaconate undergo a thorough psychological assessment before being accepted. Priests and deacons comply with requirements for fingerprinting.

School personnel and religious education instructors are screened for the ability to work safely with children. They are offered instruction on appropriate professional conduct with students and are provided information to help recognize and deal with issues of child sexual abuse.

The Diocese of San Diego is committed, in collaboration with parents, educators and community leaders, to maintain a safe environment for children and young people.

## Responding to Sexual Abuse

The Diocese of San Diego is committed to deal effectively with allegations of sexual abuse by a policy which requires:

- Offering immediate pastoral care to persons who claim to have been victims of sexual abuse.
- Reporting allegations of sexual abuse to public authorities and cooperating with their investigation.
- Promoting transparency and openness, within the confines of respect for the rights and the reputation of the individuals involved.
- Removing offenders from ministry when it is admitted or established that a criminal offense of sexual abuse has occurred, all in accord with Church law.
- Reaching out with pastoral concern and care to victims of sexual abuse and their families to foster healing and reconciliation with them.

*For the complete Policy on Sexual Abuse by Church Ministers, see:*

[www.diocese-sdiego.org](http://www.diocese-sdiego.org)

## Reporting Allegations of Sexual Misconduct

The Diocese of San Diego treats all allegations of sexual misconduct seriously and deals with them in a prompt, confidential and thorough manner.

### KEEP IN MIND:

- Every person has the right to be treated with the dignity befitting a child of God.
- Every person has the right to have appropriate boundaries respected.
- Every person has the right to challenge any comment or behavior that is perceived to be sexually oriented.

### A complaint may be made by contacting:

The Office of the Chancellor  
P.O. Box 85728  
San Diego CA 92186-5728

858.490.8310

[misconduct@diocese-sdiego.org](mailto:misconduct@diocese-sdiego.org)