

**Diocese of Columbus, Ohio**  
**Harassment Policy (Adult)**  
**4116.15**

1. 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.
2. It is the policy of the Diocese of Columbus to maintain a spiritually enriching environment in all programs and activities, free of all forms of harassment and intimidation. No participant, volunteer adult leader, or parish 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.
3. 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 a 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.

Sex 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 a demeaning 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 any effect on the 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.

4. A sexually hostile environment can be created by a parish employee, volunteer, participant, or visitor to the parish activity.
5. Any person who believes that he/she is subject to unlawful harassment or intimidation must contact either 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.
6. 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 the circumstances. Such action may include, depending on the circumstances, disciplinary measures up to and including termination of services.
7. No retaliation against anyone who reports harassment will be tolerated. The Diocese prohibits such retaliation and will take appropriate responsive action if retaliation occurs.

## **PARISH RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Periodically each parish shall give staff and volunteers a copy of the Harassment Policy. It is recommended that the Harassment Policy Verification Form be signed and returned.
2. Each parish program shall follow diocesan procedures for timely investigation and response to complaints.
3. Each parish shall periodically train program administrators, staff and volunteers to ensure that they understand which types of behavior constitute harassment, the prevention of harassment, and how they should respond in the event of experiencing such behavior. Records are to be kept of training dates and names of those in attendance.
4. Each parish program shall include the Harassment Policy in materials distributed to the program's staff/volunteers.

**Diocese of Columbus, Ohio  
Harassment Policy Verification Form  
4116.15**

I, \_\_\_\_\_,  
please print your name

Check one of the following:

- 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.

Name of parish and program: \_\_\_\_\_

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_