



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,

Most Reverend Robert W. McElroy  
Bishop of San Diego

## 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. Reported or suspected criminal abuse is reported to law enforcement in accord with civil laws.

### 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.

### To report sexual misconduct including abuse contact:

Mary Acosta  
Victim Assistance Coordinator  
858.490.8353  
[misconduct@sdatholic.org](mailto:misconduct@sdatholic.org)

For additional information, resources, and healing opportunities for victim/survivors, families, schools and parishes visit:

[safeinourdiocese.org](http://safeinourdiocese.org)

## Respecting Boundaries in Ministerial Relationships

### SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Preventing | Responding | Reporting



Diocese 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 - sexualized language or conduct found to be unwelcome and offensive.
- Sexual exploitation - sexual conduct which violates a trust-relationship.
- Sexual abuse - sexual conduct between an adult and a minor or a "vulnerable adult" as defined by law, including providing them with pornography.

For examples of sexual misconduct never acceptable in ministerial relationships, and policies on sexual misconduct and sexual abuse by church ministers, visit:

[safeinourdiocese.org](http://safeinourdiocese.org)

## Preventing Sexual Misconduct

It is always the responsibility of Church ministers to respect and maintain appropriate emotional and relational boundaries with 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.

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.

All children in Catholic schools, religious education classes, and youth groups receive age appropriate training that promotes healthy boundaries and teaches them how to protect themselves from harm.

Church ministers are required to abide by diocesan policies prohibiting sexual misconduct. The diocese also makes clear the procedures for dealing with incidents of sexual misconduct.

All candidates for the priesthood and permanent diaconate undergo a thorough psychological assessment before being accepted.

Clergy, parish staff, religious education instructors and school personnel are screened for the ability to work safely with children. They are required to take comprehensive training on appropriate professional conduct with minors and are provided information to help recognize and deal with issues of child sexual abuse, including grooming behavior.

### Mandated Reporting: It's the Law

Civil law requires that schoolteachers, principals, Directors of Catechetical Ministry, coaches, priests and deacons report awareness or reasonable suspicion of abuse of any child or vulnerable adult as soon as it is disclosed or observed.

#### STEP 1

Call the Child Abuse Hotline ASAP  
**San Diego County 800-344-6000**  
**Imperial County 760-337-7750**

#### STEP 2

Submit a written report  
(form 8572) within 36 hrs.

## Responding to Sexual Abuse

The Diocese of San Diego is committed to deal effectively and promptly with allegations of sexual abuse by:

- Offering immediate pastoral care to persons who report they are a victim of sexual abuse.
- Reporting allegations of sexual abuse to the appropriate authorities and cooperating with their investigation.
- Promoting transparency and openness, within the confines of respect for the rights and privacy of the individuals involved.
- Permanently removing offenders from ministry when it is admitted or established that a criminal offense of sexual abuse has occurred.
- Reaching out with pastoral concern and care to victims/survivors of sexual abuse and their families to foster healing and reconciliation with them.