



**EDMUND RICE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS
NORTH AMERICA PROVINCE**

POLICY STATEMENT:

**Policies for Maintaining
Ethical Ministry with Adults**

October 2020

Terms

“*Member*” is a perpetually professed religious, an annually professed religious, a novice, a residential candidate or a residential volunteer of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America Province.

All references to “*Province Leader*” in this policy statement are understood to mean “Province Leader or his delegate”.

Section 1. Standards of Conduct for Ministry with Adults

A **pastoral relationship** is a relationship between a Member and any person to whom such Member provides pastoral care which includes, but is not limited to, counseling, spiritual direction or spiritual guidance and/or when a Member has received confidential or privileged information. All educational and outreach ministries of the Christian Brothers are considered pastoral relationships for the purpose of this document. Similarly, Members who serve as sponsors in 12-Step groups are deemed to be in a pastoral relationship. The following are guidelines for maintaining integrity in pastoral relationships with adults.

A. Boundaries in Ministry

1. For the purposes of this policy, **sexually oriented physical contact** is defined as vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, oral intercourse or the touching of an erogenous zone of another (including but not limited to the thighs, genitals, buttocks, pubic region or chest) for the purpose of sexually arousing or gratifying either person.
2. It is considered to be **sexual exploitation** whenever sexual contact occurs between a Member and a person with whom the Member has a pastoral relationship. The nature of the relationship is exploitation, regardless of who initiates the sexual contact.
3. Members must never engage in sexually oriented physical contact with the persons with whom they have a pastoral relationship. This includes consensual contact, forced physical contact, and sexually oriented conversations not related to counseling issues. Consecrated religious brothers are required in all circumstances to live a celibate lifestyle as prescribed by the vow of chastity.
4. Members assume the full burden for setting and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all pastoral relationships.
5. Physical contact in pastoral relationships should be respectful and consistent with the intent to provide a safe and comfortable environment.
6. Ministry should be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times and should not be held at places or times that would tend to cause confusion about the nature of the relationship

for the person being counseled.

7. Ministry should not be conducted in private living quarters or bedrooms.
8. The community must give its consent for adult persons, other than Christian Brothers or relatives of a Christian Brother, to spend overnight(s) at the community residence. Each community is required to keep a log of the names of adults who spend overnight(s) in the community, including other Christian Brothers and family members. For an adult, other than Christian Brothers or a relative of a Christian Brother, to spend two weeks or more at a community residence requires permission of the Province Leader. Such permission should be sought at least two weeks in advance.

B. Supervision

1. Members who provide counseling to others shall be required to have ongoing professional supervision or to refer them to professional counseling after four sessions have been held.
2. Members practicing formal spiritual direction shall submit that ministry to peer or supervisory review with a spiritual advisor.
3. Members in pastoral relationships are responsible for seeking the counsel and pastoral guidance of a person of spiritual wisdom should they find themselves at risk of acting on sexual or romantic attraction to a parishioner, client or counselee.
4. Members who provide counseling shall maintain a log of the times and places of sessions with each person being counseled as well as a record of the session.

C. Confidentiality

1. Information disclosed to a Member during the course of counseling, advising, or spiritual direction shall be held in confidence whenever possible.
2. A breach of confidentiality occurs when a Member discloses privileged information in the absence of compelling professional reasons or as required by law.
3. A Member should discuss the nature of confidentiality and its limitations with each person in counseling.
4. Information obtained in the course of sessions shall be confidential, except for compelling professional reasons or as required by law.
 - If there is clear and imminent danger to the client or to others, the Member is to disclose the information necessary to protect the parties involved and to prevent harm.
 - Before disclosure is made, if feasible, the Member should inform the person being counseled about the disclosure and the potential consequences.

5. Knowledge that arises from professional contact may be used in teaching or other public presentations as illustrative examples to enhance lessons. In such instances, measures should be taken to absolutely safeguard both the individual's identity and the confidentiality of the disclosures.

D. Conflicts of Interest

1. Conflict of interest exists when a member takes advantage of a pastoral relationship in order to further his own personal, religious, political, or business interests.
2. A Member should avoid situations that might present a conflict of interest between a counselor and a person being counseled. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call integrity and professional conduct into question.
3. If a conflict of interest exists or arises, the Member should inform all parties. Resolution of the issues must protect the person being counseled.
4. The Member must establish clear, appropriate boundaries with anyone with whom there is a business, professional, or social relationship.
5. Members shall not step beyond their competence in counseling situations and shall refer the person they are counseling to other professionals when appropriate.

E. Responsibilities in Ministry

1. Members are responsible for recognizing and respecting the power of the ministerial role.
2. Members are responsible for giving and accepting feedback from others.
3. Members are responsible for developing resources to meet their own spiritual and emotional needs.
4. Members are responsible for taking care of their own health in order to avoid the serious impairment of judgment that is associated with sleep deprivation, nutritional deficiencies and excessive workloads.
5. Members are responsible for not becoming sexually involved with those they serve in ministry – regardless of who initiates the contact, this includes with other Christian Brothers and/or with Brothers in initial formation.
6. Members are responsible to avoid using profanity or obscenity in the presence of those they serve in ministry.
7. Members are responsible to avoid speaking graphically about sexual activities or allowing others to do so.

8. Members are responsible to avoid showing sexually oriented materials to those they serve in ministry.
9. Members are responsible for maintaining boundaries with those they serve in ministry at all times.
10. Members are responsible to never use their role in ministry to degrade or humiliate another person.
11. Members are responsible for communicating to a superior when they have concerns about their own or others' relationships.
12. Members are responsible for recognizing the warning signs of boundary violations. Some of these warning signs include the following:
 - Wearing special clothes when you know you are going to see a certain person.
 - Spending extra time grooming yourself when you know you are going to see a certain person.
 - Finding ways or reasons to be alone with a certain person.
 - Keeping aspects of your relationship with a person secret from others (such as how often you talk on the phone or see each other alone).
 - Giving and receiving special gifts from a certain person.
 - Neglecting to spend time with others because you want to spend more time with a certain person.
 - Sharing personal information about others with a certain person.
 - Sharing personal information or seeking help with personal problems from a certain person.
 - Excessively looking forward to seeing a certain person.
 - Fantasizing or daydreaming about a certain person.

Section 2: Reporting Misconduct (Sexual Contact or Sexual Exploitation) with Adults

- A. Members are responsible for ensuring the ethics of ministry in the Province. Communication regarding misconduct (sexual contact or sexual exploitation) by Members in ministry with adults is essential for the continuing integrity of these ministries.
- B. Members shall report misconduct (sexual contact or sexual exploitation) with adults to the Province Leader. Reports of suspected or known misconduct (sexual contact or sexual exploitation) may be made confidentially (unless otherwise required to be disclosed by Canon Law) to any of the following:
 - a) the Local Community Leader/Contact Person;
 - b) the Province Leader;

c) the Congregation Leader; or

An anonymous, specific and verifiable letter of concern may be sent to any of the above. Anonymous concerns will be investigated to the extent that is feasible based on known information.