

**Policy for Testimonials and Statement of Suitability for Priestly Ministry
Diocese of Wichita**

In response to the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children*, the Diocese of Wichita wants, by means of this policy, to ensure the safety of children within our diocese on occasions when a priest from outside our diocese visits and (1) serves in any ministerial capacity (2) in a Catholic setting (3) where children may be present.

1. DEFINITION OF TERMS

(1) By “serves in any ministerial capacity” is meant any action by which a Catholic priest ministers, whether this be sacramental, liturgical or devotional, teaching, or any other service by which he speaks or acts in regard to Church teaching or practice. This ministry may be “temporary” or a “stable assignment”.

(2) By “a Catholic setting” is meant any parish, mission, oratory, chapel, school, hospital, or any other Catholic institution, or within any program or *ad hoc* meeting or assembly that either takes place on Church property or is sponsored by a Catholic parish or institution.

(3) By “where children may be present” is meant any physical location where children are either expected to be present or may potentially be present. “Children” is defined as those who are 17 years of age or younger.

(4) Clarifications about the definition of terms can be sought through the Office of the Bishop.

2. WHEN A DECISION IS MADE FOR A PRIEST TO MINISTER

[SEE PAGE 3 FOR AN OUTLINE OF ALL STEPS TO BE FOLLOWED]

As soon as a *church employee or volunteer* responsible for planning or scheduling a Church activity learns that a *visiting priest* (who is not incardinated in the Diocese of Wichita) intends or has been invited to serve in any ministerial capacity in a Catholic setting where children may be present, the following must occur: this Church employee or volunteer will inform the *pastor, chaplain, or supervisor* who is responsible for the Catholic parish or institution that will hold or sponsor the event at which the visiting priest will minister.

3. FURTHER OBLIGATIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

The pastor, chaplain, or supervisor will direct the visiting priest, either directly or through a third person, of the obligation of the visiting priest to have the documentation required by the Diocese of Wichita completed **before** the visiting priest may minister as planned. Note that the documentation must be signed by the visiting priest’s bishop, eparch (for an Eastern rite priest) or religious superior.

It is also the responsibility of the visiting priest—once he is notified of this obligation—to see to it that this completed documentation is forwarded to the pastor, chaplain, or supervisor in question. It is the responsibility of the pastor, chaplain or supervisor to make sure that the required documentation is in his or her possession **before** the visiting priest may minister.

4. RETENTION OF DOCUMENTATION

Once the visiting priest presents the required documentation to the pastor, chaplain or supervisor in question, this latter person is responsible for:

(1) forwarding a copy of the required documentation to the Office of the Bishop of the Diocese of Wichita.

(2) archiving the original documentation in the files of the parish or institution where the ministry takes place.

Both of these steps must be completed **before** the visiting priest may minister.

5. MODELS FOR THE REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

Models of the required documentation can be found online at the following page of the Diocese of Wichita's website:

<http://catholicdioceseofwichita.org/links-a-resources/protection-of-youth>

Pages 1-2 of this DOC file consist of this policy description.

Page 3 of this DOC file consists of a flowchart outlining this policy.

Pages 4-6 of this DOC file consist of the three pages which can be used as models for a priest's bishop, eparch (for Eastern rite priests), or religious superior to follow in completing the needed documentation.

In any given case, only one of these three pages will be needed. One page is for a Religious Order priest whose ministry will be temporary. A second page is for diocesan priests whose ministry will be temporary. A third page is for a religious order priest whose ministry will be for a "stable assignment".

It is presumed that, ordinarily, the documentation will be accessed by the visiting priest via the Internet. However, it is the responsibility of each pastor, chaplain or supervisor to have copies of the required documentation at hand, so that it can be forwarded by other means if requested by the visiting priest. Likewise, those offices of the diocesan curia that the Bishop of Wichita specifically instructs to do so will also have copies of the required documentation at hand, in case they are consulted about this policy.

Effective:

November 1, 2009

Solemnity of All Saints

+ Michael O. Jackels
Bishop of Wichita

OUTLINE OF STEPS

- Step 1** **Church employee or volunteer**
learns that a priest from outside the Wichita diocese
either has decided himself, or has been invited
to serve ministerially within the Diocese of Wichita.
- Step 2** **Church employee or volunteer**
directs this information to the
pastor, chaplain or supervisor
who is responsible for the parish or institution where
the visiting priest's ministry will occur.
- Step 3** *Pastor, chaplain or supervisor (or delegate thereof)*
informs the visiting priest that the visiting priest must:
✘ obtain a model of the required documentation;
✘ have the documentation completed by his bishop/eparch/religious superior;
✘ submit the completed documentation to the
pastor, chaplain or supervisor
who is responsible for the parish or institution where
the visiting priest's ministry will occur.
- Step 4** Visiting priest
obtains the model for the required documentation.
- Step 5** Visiting priest
has the documentation completed by his bishop/eparch/religious superior.
- Step 6** Visiting priest
submits the completed documentation to the
pastor, chaplain or supervisor
who is responsible for the parish or institution where
the visiting priest's ministry will occur.
- Step 7** *Pastor, chaplain or supervisor (or delegate thereof)*
forwards a copy of the documentation to the
Office of the Bishop of the Diocese of Wichita.
- Step 8** *Pastor, chaplain or supervisor (or delegate thereof)*
archives the original documentation in the
permanent files of the parish or institution.

*Once the steps above have been completed,
the visiting priest's ministry may take place.*

Model for a Celebret/Testimonial of Suitability for Temporary Ministry of Religious Priests

[(Arch) Bishop's NAME]

[Address]

Dear (Arch) Bishop N.N.:

In light of the provisions of canon 903 CIC and canon 703 §1 CCEO, and under the Guidelines proposed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Conference of Major Superiors of Men, Leadership Conference of Women Religious and Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (NCCB, November 1993) and the policies of this religious institute, I write to certify the suitability of [NAME] as a member of this religious institute in good standing. I do this in the spirit of mutuality, trust, respect and common understanding in accord with the principles set forth in *Mutuae Relationes* (Rome, May 14, 1978).

Specifically, I write to inform you that Rev. [NAME] is a member of the Province of [PROVINCE NAME], who currently resides in [PLACE OF RESIDENCE]. He will be exercising ministry at [NAME OF THE CHURCH OR INSTITUTION] in [LOCATION OF THE CHURCH OR INSTITUTION] in your diocese, on [DATE].

I am able to make the following statements:

He is a person of good moral character and reputation.

I know of nothing which would in any way limit or disqualify him from this ministry.

I am unaware of anything in his background which would render him unsuitable to work with minor children.

Respectfully in Christ,

[Name of the (Arch) bishop/Eparch]

[Title]

[Date]

Effective _____ through _____

Model for a Celebret/Testimonial of Suitability for Temporary Priestly Ministry for Diocesan Priests

[(Arch) bishop/Eparch's NAME]

[Address]

Dear (Arch) Bishop N.N.:

In light of the provisions of canon 903 CIC and canon 703 §1 CCEO, I write to inform you that Rev. [NAME] is an incardinated priest of the [(Arch) diocese/Eparchy] of [LOCATION], who currently resides in [PLACE OF RESIDENCE]. He will be exercising ministry at [NAME OF THE CHURCH OR INSTITUTION] in [LOCATION OF THE CHURCH OR INSTITUTION] in your diocese, on [DATE].

In regard to Rev. [NAME], I am able to make following statements:

He is a person of good moral character and reputation.

I know of nothing which would in any way limit or disqualify him from this ministry.

I am unaware of anything in his background which would render him unsuitable to work with minor children.

Respectfully in Christ,

[Name of the (Arch) bishop/Eparch]

[Title]

[Date]

Effective _____ through _____

Model for a Letter/Statement on the Suitability of a Religious Priest for a Stable Assignment

[(Arch) Bishop/Eparch's NAME]

[Address]

Dear (Arch) Bishop N.N.:

Under the Guidelines proposed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Conference of Major Superiors of Men, Leadership Conference of Women Religious and Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (NCCB, November 1993) and the policies of this religious institute, I write to certify the suitability of [NAME] as a member of this religious institute in good standing. I do this in the spirit of mutuality, trust, respect and common understanding in accord with the principles set forth in *Mutuae Relationes* (Rome, May 14, 1978).

Specifically, I write to inform you that I have proposed a member of our Province, Rev. [NAME], to the [PLACE], effective [DATE], as [ASSIGNMENT].

[NAME] was born on [DATE], made his Final Profession on [DATE], and was ordained to the Priesthood on [DATE]. [Include information such as DATES OF PREVIOUS ASSIGNMENTS, RELEVANT INFORMATION, and SPECIAL SKILLS here].

I am able to the best of my ability to assure you that [NAME] is a person of good moral character and reputation and is qualified to serve in an effective and suitable manner in your diocese. In addition, also based on inquiry and to the best of my knowledge, and in light of the provisions of canon 903 CIC and canon 703 §1 CCEO, I can assure you that nothing in his background in anyway would limit or disqualify him from this assignment.

I am unaware of anything in his background which would render him unsuitable to work with minor children. [NAME] has completed training in an educational program, a diocesan and/or the CMSM *Instruments of Hope and Healing–Safeguarding Children and Young People* program, conducted by Praesidium Religious Services, [GIVE DATES OF ATTENDANCE], which is in accord with the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests and Deacons* (USCCB 2006).

Therefore, I respectfully ask that the priestly faculties of the [NAME OF (ARCH) DIOCESE or EPARCHY] be granted to [NAME], effective [DATE], and for the duration of his assignment to [PLACE].

Be assured of my prayers for you during this time.

Respectfully in Christ,

[Name of the Major Superior]

[Title]

[Date]

Effective _____ through _____