

BOOK I: THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Title I: Priests

Section 1: Certain Appointments of Priests

Vicar Forane

1. A Vicar Forane is to be appointed for a term of five years, without prejudice to the norms of canons 184ff. (Can. 554 §2)
2. The appointment as a Vicar Forane will cease should he be transferred to a Parish outside the vicariate.

Section 2: The Rights and Obligations of Priests

Unless otherwise specified, the norms of this section apply only to priests who are either (1) incardinated in the Diocese of Corpus Christi or (2) entrusted with an ecclesiastical office or function by the Bishop of Corpus Christi.

The Spiritual Life of Priests

3. Every priest is obliged to make an annual retreat of not less than four days; it can be either a retreat sponsored by the Diocese or another retreat. (Can. 276 §2.4)
4. The cost of the retreat is to be borne by the Parish or institution that the priest serves, not to exceed the amount specified in the instructions of the Local Ordinary.
5. If a priest fulfills his retreat obligation at a retreat not sponsored by the Diocese, he is to inform the Vicar for Clergy of the time and place of his retreat. His allowance for that retreat is not to exceed the amount set by the Diocese for priest retreats.
6. Every priest is to have a spiritual director.
7. Priests are urged to approach the sacrament of penance frequently. (Can. 276 §2.5)
8. Priests are encouraged to attend the annual gatherings for priests that are sponsored by the Diocese.
9. Priests are encouraged to foster fraternal relations with other priests by means of gatherings for prayer, priestly support groups, and associations that are in keeping with their ministry as priests. (Can. 278 §2)

Continuing Formation of Priests

10. A priest may not be absent from the annual priest Convocation, except for just cause and with the previous permission of the Local Ordinary.
11. The costs for each priest to attend the Convocation and annual gatherings for priests are borne by the Parish or institution that he serves, not to exceed the amount specified in the instructions of the Local Ordinary.

An additional allowance for expenses relating to continuing education is to be made available to each priest by the Parish or institution that he serves, not to exceed the amount specified in the instructions of the Local Ordinary.

Vacation and Time Off

12. Every priest is entitled to thirty days of vacation each calendar year. (Can. 283 §2, 533 §2, 550 §3)
13. The time required for the annual retreat is not computed as part of the thirty days of vacation.
14. Time dedicated to one pilgrimage that is part of the ministry of the priest and is sponsored by the Diocese or the Parish where the priest is assigned is not computed as part of the thirty days of vacation. Any other pilgrimage is computed as part of the thirty days of vacation unless otherwise authorized by the Diocesan Bishop.
15. Travel time for vacation is included as part of the thirty days of vacation.
16. Vacation time in excess of thirty days requires the permission of the Local Ordinary.
17. In addition to the thirty days of vacation granted to a priest, every priest is entitled to one day off each week.
18. A priest incardinated in the Diocese or holding an office in the Diocesan offices may not be absent from the Diocese for more than one month without the permission of the Local Ordinary.
19. Expenses related to the vacation of a priest are the personal responsibility of the priest.

Other Rights and Obligations

20. Every priest must have an annual physical.
21. Priests are to wear suitable ecclesiastical garb while engaged in the exercise of their ministry. (Can. 284)
22. A Pastor or Parochial Vicar does not have authority to lend Parish funds to himself or to any other person.
23. Priests may not engage in commerce or trade, either for their own benefit or that of others, without the permission of the Local Ordinary. (Can. 286)
24. Priests incardinated in the Diocese must participate in the social security system and may not withdraw from participation, even if permitted to do so by civil law.
25. Every priest incardinated in the Diocese is to provide the following documents to the Chancellor, which are to be placed in a separate envelope with the title of the document on the envelope and maintained in the Diocesan archives:

- a. A will that is to be updated at least once every ten years;
- b. An inventory of personal material belongings;
- c. A written statement specifying the location of financial documents that are not otherwise listed or defined in the priest's will;
- d. A list, including names and addresses, of the priest's next of kin;
- e. A copy of a medical power of attorney or advance directive to physicians;
- f. A durable power of attorney for property or other such legal devices to manage property during serious illness or incapacity; and,
- g. Instructions regarding the priest's preferences regarding his funeral liturgy and burial.

Section 3: Financial Support of Priests

Agreements for Priests Not Incardinated in the Diocese

26. The Diocesan Bishop will enter into an agreement with the relevant Diocese or religious community of a priest not incardinated in the Diocese that will govern the financial support of a priest who has a priestly assignment in the Diocese.

Entitlement to Remuneration or Sustenance

27. Priests who are incardinated in the Diocese and are in the following categories are to receive Remuneration:

- a. Priests assigned to a Parish in the Diocese as a Pastor or Parochial Vicar.
- b. Priests assigned to the Diocesan offices.
- c. Priests assigned as Chaplains or Rectors in the Diocese.
- d. Priests assigned to serve in another diocese or in an institution in the Diocese or another diocese. If the other diocese or institution offers less Remuneration than given to priests in the Diocese, the Diocesan Bishop and the assigned priest will enter into an agreement as to whether the Diocese will supplement the remuneration offered by the other diocese or institution.
- e. Priests assigned to complete advanced studies. The Diocesan Bishop and the assigned priest will enter into an agreement as to whether the Remuneration will be decreased by the amount of other benefits the priest receives.
- f. Priests who, with the express permission of the Diocesan Bishop, are: (i) on a nonrecurring temporary leave of absence; (ii) on a sabbatical; or (iii) participating in a nonrecurring health or wellness program. The amount of Remuneration may be modified by agreement between the Diocesan Bishop and the priest based on the circumstances of each case.

- g. Priests who dedicate themselves part time to an assignment in the Diocese and part time to another ministry from which they also receive remuneration will enter into an agreement with the Diocesan Bishop about the amount of Remuneration they are to receive from the assignment in the Diocese according to equity and the circumstances of each situation.
28. Priests incardinated in the Diocese in the following categories are to receive Sustenance rather than Remuneration, to the extent that their other means of support are insufficient for their sustenance:
- a. Priests who are able to serve in a priestly assignment and who refuse a legitimate priestly assignment;
 - b. Priests who are not able to serve in a priestly assignment because of a canonical irregularity, impediment, or penalty other than dismissal from the clerical state;
 - c. Priests who are not able to serve in a priestly assignment on a long-term or permanent basis because of a physical or mental infirmity; and
 - d. Retired priests.
29. Priests formerly incardinated in the Diocese who are dismissed from the clerical state do not receive Remuneration or Sustenance. Any entitlement to a pension benefit in a pension plan is governed by the terms of the pension plan.

Responsibility for the Cost of Clergy Support

30. If a priest is assigned full time to a Parish, the Parish is responsible for the cost of his Remuneration.
31. If a priest is assigned full time to the Diocesan offices, the Diocese is responsible for the cost of his Remuneration.
32. If a priest is assigned part-time to a Parish and part-time to the Diocesan offices or other institution, the Diocesan Bishop will determine the equitable division of the cost to provide the Remuneration.
33. If a priest maintains a part-time schedule when assigned to a Parish or other institution because of medical conditions or other limiting conditions, the Parish or other institution and the Diocesan Bishop will enter into an agreement related to the equitable division of the cost to provide the Remuneration.
34. If a priest is assigned to complete advanced studies that removes the priest from a priestly assignment on a temporary or periodic basis, the Diocesan Bishop and the place of the priest's assignment will enter into an agreement related to the equitable division of the cost of the priest's Remuneration.

35. If a priest is on a temporary leave of absence, sabbatical, or participating in health or wellness program, the place of the priest's assignment will continue to incur the costs of providing the priest's Remuneration. If the priest has no assignment, the Diocese will incur the costs of Remuneration.
36. Except as otherwise provided in this code of particular law, the Diocese bears the cost of providing Sustenance to priests.
37. The governing documents of the Priests Pension Plan sets forth the manner in which contributions and payments are made regarding the plan. Without prejudice to the responsibility of the Diocesan Bishop under canon law, the Priests Pension Plan provides for the support of retired priests incardinated in the Diocese.
38. Any diocesan priest with an assignment in the Diocese, even if he is not incardinated, is enrolled in the Priests Pension Plan for purposes of a disability pension should he become permanently disabled while working in the Diocese. If he should seek incardination into the Diocese, upon incardination, he would receive credit for previous years of service in the Diocese as well as his years of service until reaching retirement.

Form and Amount of Remuneration

39. The below norms on the form and amount of Remuneration apply to the following priests:
 - a. Priests incardinated in the Diocese who are entitled to Remuneration and
 - b. Other priests who have been formally entrusted by the Diocesan Bishop with a full-time ministry, unless an agreement between the Diocese and the other priest, his diocese, or his religious community makes other provisions regarding remuneration.
40. Priests are to receive a salary in the amount established by the *Instruction on the Financial Support of Priests* issued by the Local Ordinary.
 - a. Parishes, Catholic schools, and institutions in the Diocese may not give a salary that is greater or lesser than this amount.
 - b. If a Parish, Catholic school, or institution is unable to pay the required salary, the Pastor, Parochial Administrator, Superintendent, or administrator of the institution shall notify and consult with the Vicar for Clergy.
 - c. Payments to priests under a different character, nature, or name, are prohibited unless specifically authorized in these norms, or specifically permitted by the Diocesan Bishop.
 - d. All stole fees, which are free-will offerings, associated with the celebration of any sacrament, funerals, and quinces that are given to the Pastor, Parochial Administrator, or Parochial Vicar are to be placed in the Parish account unless it is clear from the donor that the fee is for the sole purpose of the celebrant. (Can. 531)

41. Priests are entitled to a suitable place of residence.
 - a. Except as otherwise permitted by law, every Parish is to own a rectory within the Parish boundaries suitable for use of the priests who serve the Parish.
 - b. The Parish is responsible for the cost of maintaining the rectory.
 - c. A priest may not receive a housing allowance from the Parish to be applied to the purchase of a priest's own dwelling or other property.
 - d. Priests are to be provided a reasonable food allowance in the amount established by the Local Ordinary to be paid by the Parish or institution.
 - e. Only priests and seminarians can reside within a rectory unless otherwise approved by the Diocesan Bishop.
 - f. A layperson is not permitted to reside in a Parish rectory nor is a layperson allowed to stay overnight at a Parish rectory unless otherwise approved by the Diocesan Bishop.
42. Priests are entitled to receive reasonable health insurance through the plan used by the Diocese. The Local Ordinary determines the terms and coverages that are to be offered.
 - a. The Diocese shall invoice each Parish or institution where a priest is serving for the priest's health insurance premium; the Parish or institution is responsible for timely payments of the invoices.
 - b. It is the responsibility of the Parish or institution to pay the health insurance premiums for each priest who serves at the Parish or institution.
 - c. In the case of priests whose community or religious institute maintains separate health insurance coverage for the priests in the community, the Parish or institution will pay the same premium amount (as would have been invoiced by the Diocese if the priest was enrolled in the Diocese's coverage or plan) to the priest's community for the priest's health insurance.
43. If a priest is enrolled in Medicare and active in ministry, the Diocesan Health Plan is the primary plan, and Medicare is the secondary plan.
44. The Diocese will purchase insurance on the life of every priest with an official appointment in the Diocese. The beneficiary of the insurance policy shall be the Diocese.
45. The Diocese will invoice each Parish or institution for its contributions to the Priests Pension Plan; the Parish or institution is responsible for timely payments of the invoices.
46. The norms of universal and particular law are to be observed in all matters regarding Mass stipends and other offerings.

47. The amount of Remuneration that Parishes may offer to priests not assigned to the Parish for periodic or occasional ministry in the Parish is established by the *Instruction on the Financial Support of Priests* issued by the Local Ordinary.
48. Priests are entitled to receive reimbursement for expenses listed in the *Instruction on the Financial Support of Priests* issued by the Local Ordinary.
49. A priest is not entitled to receive reimbursement for other expenses not listed in the *Instruction on the Financial Support of Priests* issued by the Local Ordinary.¹
50. To be eligible for reimbursement, expenses must meet the conditions set forth in civil law to be a non-taxable accountable plan.²
51. The Parish or institution and the priest are to maintain the invoice or receipt as a record for five years.
52. When incurring reimbursable expenses, the amounts must be reasonable. The expenditures should be authorized in the Parish or institution's budget. The Parish and the priest must exercise good stewardship and prudence related to the purchase of such items.

Section 4: Sabbaticals

53. The norms of this section apply only to priests incardinated in the Diocese.

Description

54. A sabbatical is an educational leave for a period of three to four months, in which a priest takes a leave of absence from the responsibilities of his assignment to pursue a specific program of formation or a combination of different elements that fit the particular personal and ministerial needs of the priest.
55. The following are not considered to be a sabbatical:
 - a. a vacation that is used solely for rest, relaxation, and recreation;
 - b. a retreat that is oriented solely toward spiritual renewal;
 - c. sick leave that is intended for the recovery of physical health;

¹ Non-reimbursable expenses include but are not limited to: the cost of purchasing an automobile, the cost of operating and maintaining a second automobile, the purchase price of a cellular phone, personal clothing, vacation expenses, educational expenses not provided for by these norms, cigarettes and alcohol, personal care items, toiletries, international personal long distance calls, cellular phone expenses related to personal use, costs for alternative treatments, services, and medications not approved by the Diocesan medical insurance plan, personal fines or fees such as speeding tickets, gym membership or personal trainer, cost of cable over basic subscription, and subscription streaming services or other personal entertainment expenses.

² These conditions are set forth in *IRS* pub. 463: the items reimbursed must have a business-related purpose, they must be supported by an invoice, bill, or receipt showing the date, total amount, and purpose of the expenditure, the reimbursement must match the actual cost of the expenditure, and the reimbursement must be requested and received before the end of the applicable tax year.

- d. pursuit of a graduate degree program for the purpose of specific professional development; and
- e. a shorter program of either spiritual or intellectual pursuit.

Eligibility

- 56. Priests incardinated in the Diocese who have served a period of at least ten consecutive years after ordination are eligible for a sabbatical.
- 57. Priests incardinated into the Diocese for a period less than ten years are eligible for a sabbatical based on the same criteria provided they have served in the Diocese for at least five years.
- 58. Subsequent sabbaticals can be taken at ten-year intervals.

Procedures for Application

- 59. A priest must submit an application for the sabbatical to the Vicar for Clergy at least one year in advance of the program. The application shall include a detailed description of the program.
- 60. Applications will be evaluated and approved by the Vicar for Clergy and confirmed by the Diocesan Bishop.

Arrangements during the Absence of a Priest for a Sabbatical

- 61. Arrangements for coverage for a priest at his priestly assignment during his sabbatical must be approved by the Local Ordinary.
- 62. The Diocesan Bishop, if necessary, may appoint a parochial administrator during the absence of a Pastor on sabbatical.

Responsibility of Sabbatical Expenses

- 63. The Diocese, the Parish or institution served by the priest, and the priest himself are each responsible to pay one-third of the total expense of the sabbatical. The maximum amount of each contribution from the Diocese and the Parish or institution may not exceed the amount established in the *Instruction on the Financial Support of Priests* issued by the Local Ordinary.
- 64. The Parish or institution served by the priest is responsible for the salary, automobile depreciation allowance, and benefits for both the priest on sabbatical and the priest who is replacing him during the time of sabbatical.
 - a. If the sabbatical is taken during an assignment where the priest has served less than three years, the Diocese shall be responsible for the priest's salary, automobile depreciation allowance, and benefits.

- b. Parishes that cannot afford such expenses should inform the Vicar for Clergy during the application process.
65. If the sabbatical occurs during the time of transition between two priestly assignments, the Diocese has the responsibility for the Remuneration of the priest on sabbatical.
 66. If the priest collects any income or funds during the sabbatical for priestly ministry provided while on sabbatical, the priest must report the receipt of such funds to the Vicar for Clergy.

Section 5: International Priests

67. The Diocese, the international priest, and the receiving Parish, Catholic school, or diocesan entity shall abide by all civil and criminal laws, including United States Immigration and State Department rules, policies, and regulations (e.g.: reporting change of residence to immigration officials). Failure to comply with laws or regulations may result in the priest losing his sponsorship and employment with the Diocese.
68. Priests with a R-1 Temporary Religious Worker Visa or a visa for Legal Permanent Residence must submit a letter of approval and a testimonial of suitability from the individual's bishop or provincial on official diocesan or provincial letterhead with a current date, an original signature, and an official seal of the diocese or province.
69. The Diocese has the right to request copies of the individual's personnel file as a condition of sponsorship.
70. The Diocese will only sponsor international priests for R-1 Visas to work in Parishes, Catholic schools, or other diocesan entities as identified in the most current *Official Catholic Directory (Kenedy Directory)*.
71. Only the Diocesan Bishop may sign immigration documents or make final decisions regarding visa sponsorship.
72. The Diocese will pay all attorney fees for obtaining immigration documents, governmental application fees, and transportation expenses for priests sponsored to work in the Diocese under the R-1 Visa, except for a priest in a religious order where it is customary and appropriate for their community to pay the attorney fees and transportation costs.
73. No international priest may purchase real property while working in the Diocese on an R-1 Visa.
74. The responsibility for payment of fees for Permanent Residence applications are as follows:
 - a. If a priest is or will be incardinated in the Diocese, the legal costs and governmental application fees will be paid by the Diocese. The priest must use the attorney who is recommended by the Diocese for immigration matters.
 - b. If a priest is not incardinated in the Diocese and the Diocesan Bishop requests that he continue to serve in the Diocese, then the Diocese will pay the legal costs and

governmental application fees. The priest must use the attorney who is recommended by the Diocese for immigration matters.

- c. If a priest is not incardinated in the Diocese and he requests permission to remain in the Diocese and the Diocesan Bishop does not object, the individual priest is responsible for paying the legal costs and government application fees. The priest may use any attorney for immigration matters.
75. The Diocese is not responsible for the legal costs or government fees for priests applying for citizenship.
76. Transportation expenses for international priests to travel to and return from their home countries for vacation or other personal business is the responsibility of the individual priest or his religious order.
77. The international priest is not permitted to solicit funds from the laity or from the Parish to pay any of the costs or fees related to the citizenship application process or for travel.
78. An international priest may be returned to their country of origin if the Local Ordinary determines that repatriation is in the best interest of the Diocese or the individual priest.

Section 6: Retired Priests

Requirements for Retirement

79. The norms of this section apply only to priests incardinated in the Diocese.
80. Priests who wish to request retirement must meet with the Diocesan Bishop to discuss his retirement six months prior to his seventieth birthday.
81. Priests may retire upon reaching the age of 70 by submitting a letter of resignation to the Diocesan Bishop and requesting retirement status.
82. Upon reaching the age of 75, priests are to submit a letter of resignation to the Diocesan Bishop.
83. If a priest having reached the age of 75 and having submitted his letter of resignation wishes to continue to serve, he is to communicate such a request to the Diocesan Bishop. After weighing the circumstances pertaining to the health and ministry of the priest, the Diocesan Bishop will decide whether to accept the resignation or permit the priest to continue to serve.
84. Priests continuing to serve after having reached the age of 75 are to review their health and ministry with the Diocesan Bishop every year. After the annual review, they are to submit their resignation if requested to do so.

85. A priest may request retirement status before the age of 70 by submitting his request to the Diocesan Bishop if such status is necessary for medical or personal reasons. A priest who wishes to retire before the age of 70 must meet with the Diocesan Bishop prior to submitting such a request for retirement. The Diocesan Bishop has the discretion to grant early retirement.

Support and Care for Retired Priests

86. The Diocesan Priests Pension Plan supports retired priests incardinated in the Diocese according to its governing documents, which will be made available to priests who request it from the Vicar for Retired Priests.
87. The Diocese provides subsidized housing and food to retired priests at the Saint John Vianney Residence for priests in amounts determined by the Local Ordinary.
88. All retired priests must enroll in Medicare, which becomes the primary health plan for the retired priests, and the Diocesan Health Plan is the secondary plan.
89. All priests who are enrolled in Medicare must submit a copy of their Medicare card to the Diocesan Human Resources Office.
90. Medical costs not covered by Medicare and the Diocesan Health Plan will be paid from the account for the Support of Priests. The priest must submit all receipts and the *Explanation of Benefits* provided by the Health Plan to the Vicar for Retired Priests in order to receive payment.
91. The Diocesan Health Plan does not cover services for priests who live outside the United States, and the Diocese is not responsible for payment of any medical services incurred outside of the United States.
92. When a priest can no longer live independently and specialized care is needed, the priest is to contribute his pension and social security benefits toward the cost of assisted living or nursing home care. Medicare is the primary insurance provider.
- a. If the priest is unable to pay the costs of such care, the Diocese will pay the remainder of the cost if a balance remains.
 - b. If the Diocese is responsible for the remainder of the cost of such care, then the Local Ordinary will determine the facility at which the priest is to receive the care and the level of care that he is to receive.
93. If the priest or his family determines that a different location is to be used or a different level of care is to be received, then the priest or his family is responsible for the costs of such facility and care.

94. A priest's funeral expenses are to be paid by the estate of the priest. The Diocese will cover the funeral expenses only if the priest's estate is not able to pay for the expenses and the amount is reasonable and approved by the Local Ordinary. The Diocese is not responsible for the costs to return the body of the priest to a location outside of the Diocese.

Title II: Deacons

Section 1: The Rights and Obligations of Deacons

Unless otherwise evident, the provisions of this Title apply only to permanent deacons. Transitional deacons are governed by the norms of universal law, and by the instructions issued for seminarians by the Local Ordinary.

The Spiritual Life of Deacons

95. Deacons are obliged to make an annual retreat of at least forty continuous hours.
96. Deacons are to have a spiritual director, who is to be a priest or a spiritual director who has completed a course of study in spiritual direction sponsored by the Diocese or who has been otherwise approved by the Diocesan Bishop.
97. Deacons are to meet with their spiritual director at least once every two months unless excused by a just cause.
98. Deacons are recommended to participate daily in the Holy Eucharist, to approach the sacrament of penance frequently, and to cultivate mental prayer.
99. Deacons are obliged to pray the liturgy of the hours according to the norms issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Continuing Education of Deacons

100. Deacons are obliged to engage in at least eighteen hours of ongoing education each year in theology, canon law, or other disciplines useful to their ministry.
101. Each year, before March 31, each deacon is obliged to submit a written report to the Director of the Office of Permanent Diaconate indicating how he fulfilled the obligation of a retreat, spiritual direction, and continuing education during the previous calendar year.

Other Rights and Obligations of Deacons

102. When engaged in ministry, deacons are to wear clothing that is neat, clean, modest, dignified, and appropriate to the occasion.
103. Deacons may not wear clerical attire except when the Local Ordinary permits.
104. The proper spoken and written style for a deacon is "Deacon."
105. Deacons incardinated in the Diocese are not to be absent from the Diocese for more than one month without at least the presumed permission of the Local Ordinary.

106. Deacons are not to utilize anointing with oils in prayer or devotional contexts in order to avoid all confusion with the sacraments.
107. Deacons are to submit a funeral planning form to the Director of the Office of Permanent Diaconate.

Section 2: The Assignment of Deacons to Ministries

108. Deacons are freely assigned to and freely removed from ministries by the Diocesan Bishop, unless their assignment is to a canonical office and the law provides otherwise.
109. Deacons are obliged to accept assignments from the Diocesan Bishop unless excused by just cause.
110. When a deacon is assigned to a Parish as a ministry, he is to assist the Pastor of the Parish by carrying out the ministry under the direction of the Pastor.
111. Deacons assigned to a Parish and their Pastors are to create a written ministry agreement that details the ministries in which the deacon is to be involved and the scope of the time commitments he is expected to make. The ministry agreement is to be created with due consideration for the deacon's work and family responsibilities. In the case of a married deacon, the deacon's wife is also to be consulted regarding the written ministry agreement.
112. If a deacon and Pastor are unable to agree on the terms of the written ministry agreement, they are to contact the Director of the Office of Permanent Diaconate, who is to attempt to assist them to reach an agreement. If no agreement can be reached, the Local Ordinary is to decide the matter.
113. A copy of the written ministry agreement, signed by the deacon and the Pastor, is to be sent to the Director of the Office of Permanent Diaconate.
114. The written ministry agreement is to be reviewed and either confirmed or modified when:
 - a. a deacon begins a new Parish assignment;
 - b. a new Pastor is installed in the Parish; and,
 - c. the deacon or the Pastor requests it for just cause.

Section 3: The Financial Support of Deacons

115. Unless he is employed by the Parish in a paid position, a deacon does not receive remuneration from the Parish to which he is assigned as a ministry.
116. Deacons who are employed in an ecclesiastical ministry receive remuneration from the Diocese, Parish, or other institute at which they are employed, according to the terms of their employment.
117. Deacons not employed in an ecclesiastical ministry are to provide for themselves and their families by means of the civil profession that they exercise or have exercised.

118. All stole fees, which are free-will offerings, associated with the celebration of any sacrament, funerals, and quinces that are given to the deacon are to be placed in the Parish account unless it is clear from the donor that the fee is for the sole purpose of the celebrant. (Can. 531)
119. Deacons are entitled to be reimbursed by the Parishes or institutions they serve for legitimate and reasonable expenses incurred in their ministry. The Pastor or administrator of the institution is competent to issue more precise norms in this matter provided that the amounts of the reimbursements are consistent with the general practices in the Diocese.
120. The reasonable cost of a deacon's participation in the ongoing education and annual retreat is to be borne by the Parish or institution that the deacon serves. The Parish or institution is also encouraged to bear the cost of the participation of a married deacon's wife in these activities.

Section 4: Retirement of Deacons and Leave of Absence

121. Deacons shall provide written notice to the Director of the Office of Permanent Diaconate six months prior to his seventieth birthday.
122. Except as provided in this Section, a deacon who completes his seventieth years of age is, by that fact, placed on retired status.
123. A deacon may request to continue in active ministry beyond his seventieth birthday by submitting a written request to the Diocesan Bishop. Deacons are encouraged to submit such a request six months prior to the deacon's seventieth birthday.
 - a. Such a request should be made after consultation with the deacon's Pastor or canonical supervisor and should indicate whether the Pastor or supervisor concurs with the request.
 - b. The Diocesan Bishop may grant the deacon's request to continue in active ministry, or he may deny it.
 - c. If a continuation in active ministry is granted, it may be renewed every year according to the same procedure by which it was initially granted.
 - d. If the request is denied, the deacon's retirement status is effective on the later of his seventieth birthday or when he receives notification of the denial of his request.

124. A deacon may request early retirement status of the Diocesan Bishop if his years of age and years of service as a deacon total at least 80. If a deacon's years of service and years of age do not total 80, he is not eligible for early retirement, but may be eligible to request a leave of absence.
- a. A request for early retirement must be communicated to the Diocesan Bishop in writing.
 - b. It should be made after consultation with the deacon's Pastor or canonical supervisor and should indicate whether the Pastor or supervisor concurs with the request.
125. A deacon who has been placed on retired status is:
- a. no longer bound by the ministry assignment he had received from the Diocesan Bishop;
 - b. no longer obliged to participate in ongoing education, spiritual direction, and the annual retreat; and
 - c. free to engage in occasional Parish ministry with the consent of the Pastor of the Parish in which he wishes to minister.³
126. A deacon who finds himself unable to fulfill his ministry assignment and who does not qualify for early retirement may request a leave of absence from the Diocesan Bishop.
- a. A request for a leave of absence should be made after consultation with the deacon's Pastor or canonical supervisor and should indicate whether the Pastor or supervisor concurs with the request.
 - b. If granted, a leave of absence has the same effects as retirement status, except (a) it is granted for a definite length of time and (b) the deacon may not engage in ministry except as the Diocesan Bishop may permit in his instructions in the permission granting the leave of absence.
 - c. When a leave of absence has expired, the Diocesan Bishop may extend it or may terminate it by giving the deacon a new ministry assignment. If the Diocesan Bishop does not expressly extend the leave of absence at or about the time it ends, it is to be presumed that the Diocesan Bishop has extended the leave of absence for 6 months.

³ The standard pagella for deacons in the Diocese grants them the faculty to assist at marriages within the boundaries of the Parish to which they have been assigned. Because a retired deacon is no longer technically assigned to a Parish, he must obtain delegation from the Pastor or other competent authority in order to validly assist at marriages.

Title III: Consecrated Life

Section 1: Erection of a House or Community of an Institute or Society

127. If a community that is not currently in the Diocese is seeking to minister within the Diocese, the major superior of the community must submit a written request to the Diocesan Bishop requesting permission for the community and any member to provide ministry services in the Diocese.
128. Before welcoming a community of religious or members of a society into the Diocese, the Diocesan Bishop must ensure that there is the availability of the works served by the institute or society and all that is necessary for them to live in accord with the spirit and character of the institute or society.
129. For the canonical erection of a house within the Diocese, there must be at least three members of the religious institute or society of apostolic life residing in the Diocese.
130. Prior to ministering in the Diocese, the Diocesan Bishop must issue a written approval to the major superior of the community in response to the request to minister in the Diocese.

Section 2: Requirements to Serve in the Diocese

131. A member of a religious institute or society of apostolic life wishing to be employed in an apostolate in the Diocese must submit:
 - a. A letter from the Local Ordinary of the diocese of the religious institute or society of apostolic life stating that the religious congregation is in good standing in the jurisdiction.
 - b. A letter from the member's major superior shall be provided on official provincial letterhead with a current date, an original signature, and an official seal of the province. The letter shall include the following:
 - i. The reasons that the member of the congregation is seeking to serve in the Diocese, including the services that the member will provide in the Diocese and the entity requesting the member's services;
 - ii. A statement of the health, suitability, and probity of life of the member, as well as his or her competence to carry out the ministry or apostolic works to be performed;
 - iii. A statement that the religious institute or society of apostolic life retains financial responsibility for the member, including the location of the residence of the member;
 - iv. In the case of an international member, a statement that the member is in the United States legitimately and has obtained or is in the process of obtaining a religious worker or other visa. A copy of the member's passport and visa shall be provided to the Diocese; and

- v. A statement that the major superior has disclosed all known criminal background related to the member and all complaints or allegations received by the institute or society involving the member.
- c. A letter from the prospective employer including:
 - i. A description of the apostolate in which the member would be involved;
 - ii. Proof of Safe Environment Program compliance;
 - iii. A statement that a criminal history review has been completed or will be completed prior to the member's beginning the apostolate; and
 - iv. In the case of an international member, the member's religious worker or other visa number.
132. The Local Ordinary has the right to request copies of the individual's personnel file as a condition of employment within the Diocese.
133. The major superior must assent to the appointment of a member to an ecclesiastical office. The major superior or the Diocesan Bishop can remove the member of an institute or society from an ecclesiastical office.
134. A written agreement is to be entered between the Diocesan Bishop and the major superior regarding, among other things, the work to be performed by the member, the qualifications of the member devoted to the work to be performed, the term of service, the remuneration and benefits, and an agreement as to termination for just cause.

Section 3: International Religious or Consecrated

135. The Diocese, the international religious or consecrated member, and the receiving Parish, Catholic school, or diocesan entity shall abide by all civil and criminal laws, including United States Immigration and State Department rules, policies, and regulations (e.g.: reporting change of residence to immigration officials). Failure to comply with laws or regulations may result in the religious or consecrated member losing their sponsorship and employment within the Diocese.
136. The Diocese will only sponsor international religious or consecrated for R-1 Visas to work in Parishes, Catholic schools, or other diocesan entities as identified in the most current *Official Catholic Directory (Kenedy Directory)*.
137. Only the Diocesan Bishop may sign immigration documents or make final decisions regarding visa sponsorship.
138. The Diocese will pay all attorney fees for obtaining immigration documents, governmental application fees, and transportation expenses for a religious or consecrated member sponsored to work in the Diocese under the R-1 Visa, except for a religious or consecrated member in a religious order where it is customary and appropriate for their community to pay the legal fees and transportation costs.

139. If a religious or consecrated member is approved for sponsorship for legal residence, the individual or their religious order is responsible for the legal costs and government application fees. A religious or consecrated member may use any attorney for immigration matters.
140. The Diocese is not responsible for the legal costs or government fees for a religious or consecrated member applying for citizenship.
141. No international religious or consecrated member may purchase real property while working in the Diocese while on an R-1 Visa.
142. Transportation expenses for an international religious or consecrated member to travel to and return from their home countries for vacation or other personal business is the responsibility of the individual or their religious order.
143. The religious or consecrated member is not permitted to solicit funds from the laity or from a Parish to cover any of the costs or fees related to the citizenship application process or for travel.
144. A religious or consecrated member may be returned to their country of origin if the Local Ordinary determines that repatriation is in the best interest of the Diocese or the individual.

Title IV: Parishes

Section 1: The Pastoral Council

145. Every Parish is required to have a Pastoral Council that advises the Pastor and assists him in fostering pastoral activity. (Can. 536 §1)
146. When a Parish is without an assigned Pastor, the Pastoral Council ceases until a new Pastor or administrator convenes a council.
147. Within ninety days of when a new Pastor is installed, he is to confirm the existing Pastoral Council in its function, unless, for a grave cause, he dissolves it and causes a new Pastoral Council to be selected.
148. Each Pastoral Council is to have its own statutes, approved by the Pastor, consistent with the norms of universal and particular law. A copy of the statutes is to be provided to the Chancellor to be maintained in the Diocesan archives. Standard statutes have been developed and are available in the office of the Chancellor.
149. The Pastor is, *ex officio*, the president of the Pastoral Council. The statutes may also provide for other officers but may not provide for a president or chairperson other than the Pastor.
150. Parochial Vicars are *ex officio* members of the Pastoral Council.
151. The statutes are to provide for at least five but no more than thirteen lay members of the council.

152. The statutes are to determine the method of choosing the lay members of the Pastoral Council, provided that no more than one-third of the lay members are appointed by the Pastor.
153. Members of the Pastoral Council must be Catholics, at least 18 years of age, must have received baptism, first communion, and confirmation, and must be of good reputation and outstanding in faith and virtue.
154. The statutes are to provide a length of term for the lay members of the Pastoral Council and establish whether a lay member may serve multiple or consecutive terms. Terms may not be less than three years and not more than five years in length. Terms must be staggered so that they do not all expire at the same time.
155. The statutes are to provide for filling vacancies that may occur in the Pastoral Council before the expiration of a term.
156. The Pastor is to promptly remove a member who is not eligible to serve.
157. The Pastor may also remove members for: (i) grave cause; or (ii) just cause with the consent of the Pastoral Council. A removed member may seek recourse to the Vicar General.
158. The Pastor convokes the Pastoral Council, establishes the times and places of its meetings, determines its agenda, and presides over the meetings.
159. The Pastoral Council must be convoked at least once each quarter.
160. Minutes are to be taken of every meeting of the Pastoral Council.
161. The meetings of the Pastoral Council may be open to members of the Parish at the discretion of the Pastor.
162. The Pastoral Council possesses only a consultative vote. (Can. 536 §2)
163. The Pastor is to consult the Pastoral Council on questions of greater importance. Failure to consult the Pastoral Council, however, does not result in the invalidity of juridic acts.
164. The people of the Parish are to be generally informed of the recommendations of the Pastoral Council, whether by the publication of minutes or by some other means.

Section 2: The Finance Council

165. Every Parish is required to have a Finance Council that advises the Pastor and assist him regarding the administration of the goods of the Parish. (Can. 537)
166. When a Parish is without an assigned Pastor, the Finance Council ceases until a new Pastor or administrator convenes a council.
167. When a new Pastor is installed, he is to confirm the existing Finance Council in its function, unless, for a grave cause, he dissolves it and causes a new Finance Council to be selected.
168. Each Finance Council is to have its own statutes, approved by the Pastor, consistent with

the norms of universal and particular law. A copy of the statutes is to be provided to the Chancellor to be maintained in the Diocesan archives. Standard statutes have been developed and are available in the office of the Chancellor.

169. The Pastor is, *ex officio*, the president of the Finance Council. The statutes may also provide for other officers but may not provide for a president or chairperson other than the Pastor.
170. The statutes must establish the number of members of the Finance Council, which must include at least three lay members.
171. Members of the Finance Council are freely appointed by the Pastor.
172. Members of the Finance Council are to be Catholics, at least 18 years of age, must have received baptism, first communion, and confirmation, must be of good reputation and outstanding in faith and virtue, and must possess expertise or experience in financial affairs or civil law.
173. Persons related to the Pastor within the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity are not eligible to serve as a member of the Finance Council.
174. The statutes are to provide a length of term of the lay members of the Finance Council, which is not to be less than three years and not more than five years. A member may be reappointed but may not serve more than ten consecutive years. Terms must be staggered so that they do not all expire at the same time.
175. Members of the Finance Council must sign the Code of Conduct approved by the Diocesan Finance Officer.
176. The statutes are to provide for the filling of vacancies that may occur in the Finance Council before the expiration of a term.
177. Members of the Finance Council may be removed by the Pastor before the expiration of their term only for a grave cause. Recourse against a removal may be made to the Vicar General.
178. The Pastor convokes the Finance Council, establishes the times and places of its meetings, determines its agenda, and presides over the meetings.
179. The Finance Council is to be convoked at least once each quarter.
180. Minutes are to be taken of every meeting of the Finance Council.
181. The meetings of the Finance Council may be open to members of the Parish at the discretion of the Pastor.

182. Members of the Finance Council have the right to review the financial records of the Parish.
183. The Finance Council also has those functions entrusted to it in Book IV of this Code of Particular Law.

Section 3: Parish Employees

184. The Pastor has authority over matters related to employment and employees in the Parish. It is for the Pastor or his delegate to extend offers of employment.
185. Parishes may not sponsor a person for a visa to enter or work in the United States without the consent of the Local Ordinary.
186. Every Parish is to have a written policy regarding employees that is approved by the Pastor. This policy is to regulate matters relating to compensation, paid and unpaid time off, conduct in the workplace, and expected conduct outside the workplace, in addition to other matters, which, in the judgment of the Pastor, require regulation by the written policy.⁴
187. All Diocesan pre-employment and Safe Environment Program compliance, including but not limited to, Safe Environment Program training and a criminal history review, must be completed prior to employment by a Parish. If a criminal history review is unsatisfactory or cannot be completed, the applicant is unable to be employed at the Parish or mission.
188. Every Parish employee is to be provided with a written job description.⁵
189. Before dismissing an employee, the Pastor or administrator is to seek advice from the Diocesan Human Resources and Legal departments. Failure to consult with the Diocesan Human Resources and Legal departments will result in an obligation to incur an additional deductible for expenses that arise from a dispute over the dismissal as set forth in the diocesan insurance coverages for Parishes.
190. When a Pastor or administrator has been transferred from one Parish to another, he may not remove an employee, unless there is just cause, within the first ninety days of his assignment.
 - a. If a new Pastor or administrator determines that just cause exists to terminate an employee within the first ninety days of his appointment, he must submit a written request to the Vicar Forane and the Diocesan Bishop providing the reasons for the proposed termination.
 - b. The Vicar Forane and the Diocesan Bishop must grant written approval for the termination.
191. A Pastor or administrator cannot terminate an employee for the purpose of replacing the employee with a person who worked for the Pastor or administrator in his previous

⁴ The Diocesan Human Resource department can assist Parishes in developing and implementing such policies. The office maintains model employee policies that may be adopted by Parishes.

⁵ The Diocesan Human Resources office maintains model employee job descriptions that may be adopted by Parishes.

appointment.

Section 4: Parish Lay Volunteers

192. Prior to volunteering at a Parish or mission, a lay person must present to the Safe Environment Program coordinator for the Parish or mission proper identification to have a criminal history review completed. If the criminal history review is satisfactory, then the lay person shall complete the Safe Environment Program training.
193. If a criminal history review is unsatisfactory or cannot be completed, the applicant is unable to volunteer at the Parish or mission.
194. The Pastor has the discretion to provide a direct and limited exception for the lay person; however, the person cannot volunteer within any ministry involving children or vulnerable adults. If an exception is granted, the Pastor or his delegee is responsible for the direct oversight and supervision of the volunteer.

Section 5: Requests for Foundation Grants

195. The Pastor must obtain the approval of the Diocesan Bishop prior to submitting a request for a grant from any foundation.
196. The Pastor must submit to the Diocesan Bishop a copy of the grant application that was submitted to the foundation.
197. If the foundation approves the application for a grant, the Pastor must adhere to the requirements contained in Book IV. Title III.

Section 6: Visitation by the Vicar Forane

198. The Vicar Forane is to visit each Parish in his vicariate forane at least once every three years. (Can. 555 §4)
199. During the visitation, the Vicar Forane is to visit with the Pastor, with any Parochial Vicars, and with some of the Parish staff about the state of the Parish.
200. The Vicar Forane is to inspect the following:
 - a. Parish sacramental records and note whether they are being properly inscribed and safeguarded;
 - b. The financial records of the Parish and note whether ecclesiastical goods are being carefully administered; and
 - c. The rectory, the Parish church, and other Parish buildings, and note whether they are cared for with proper diligence.

201. The Vicar Forane has the right to conduct other inspections or interviews as necessary or useful for forming an adequate representation of the state of the Parish.
202. At the conclusion of the visitation, the Vicar Forane is to deliver to the Pastor, in writing, his observations and recommendations. He is also to submit a written report to the Diocesan Bishop regarding the state of the Parish.
203. Visitations of the Parishes of which a Vicar Forane is the Pastor are to be performed by the Local Ordinary.

Title V: Safe Environment Program and Child and Family Resources

Section 1: Mission and Compliance

204. The mission of the Safe Environment Program is to protect the people of the Diocese from abuse and unethical behavior through education, action, and reporting, and to listen to and learn from those who have experienced abuse in order to provide healing.
205. It is essential that all persons who serve in ministry view their own actions and intentions objectively to assure that no observer has grounds to believe that unethical behavior exists.
206. Those in ministry must strive to uphold ethical behavior in their day-to-day work and personal lives, both “in person” and through “virtual” interactions (online, in electronic communications, and through social media).
207. All individuals required to be compliant with the Safe Environment Program must sign an acknowledgment that they will conduct themselves within the behavioral expectations outlined in the Safe Environment Program policy.
208. Individuals required to be compliant with the Safe Environment Program policies must:
 - a. strive to exhibit ethical behavior and integrity, free from any scandal;
 - b. conduct themselves in a moral manner that is consistent with the discipline, norms, and teachings of the Catholic Church;
 - c. accept personally the responsibility in the protection of all minors, elderly adults, and adults with disabilities from abuse;
 - d. adhere to applicable laws regarding the reporting of abuse of a minor, elderly adult, or an adult with disability;
 - e. report concerns about unethical behavior to the Diocese and their Pastor, principal, or supervisor; and
 - f. follow the Diocesan policies for the Safe Environment Program and remain compliant with the program requirements.

209. Individuals required to be compliant with the Safe Environment Program policies must avoid engaging in or giving the appearance of engaging in unethical behavior, including but not limited to:
- a. actions which are disruptive to ministry or worship;
 - b. grave insults, such as racial, ethnic, religious, or gender and sexual-based insults, jokes, slurs, or displays of offensive materials;
 - c. grave breaches of confidentiality;
 - d. harming the reputation of others by the following: (1) disclosing without legitimate cause the faults or failings of others to persons who have no cause to know or (2) knowingly making false allegations against another;
 - e. intimidation, manipulation, or physical or verbal threats;
 - f. adultery, promiscuity, or co-habitation;
 - g. abuse or illegal use of alcohol, drugs, or gambling;
 - h. procurement of abortion, participation in the procurement of abortion, or euthanasia;
 - i. sexual advances or activity, or other sexual misconduct;
 - j. theft;
 - k. abuse, exploitation, or neglect;
 - l. acquisition, possession, or distribution of child or any other pornographic material;
 - m. assault or intentional physical harm to another; and
 - n. committing homicide.

Section 2: Compliance Policy for Church Personnel

210. Every Parish and mission must have a coordinator who administers the database for the Safe Environment Program. The Parish or mission may hire a coordinator or contract with another Parish or the Diocese to maintain the database information. Volunteers are not allowed access to the Safe Environment Program database.
211. The following adult individuals must maintain compliance with the policies of the Office of Safe Environment Program and Child and Family Resources throughout service in ministry:
- a. clergy;
 - b. seminarians and deacon aspirants and candidates;
 - c. religious brothers and sisters;

- d. employees of any Parish, Catholic school, or other diocesan agency;
- e. independent contractors who regularly provide services where minors, elderly adults, or adults with disabilities may be present;
- f. members of any Catholic school board;
- g. Pastoral Council members;
- h. Finance Council members;
- i. lay review board members;
- j. any person who is considered to be a leader of a ministry, program, or organization;
- k. members of any independent Catholic organization, or lay ecclesial association in a Parish, Catholic school or other diocesan agency that may serve youth or vulnerable persons, even if the group's primary function is not necessarily to serve youth or vulnerable persons (e.g., adult and multicultural ministries, such as, but not limited to, Catholic Daughters of America, Knights of Columbus, Guadalupanas, ACTS, and Marriage Encounter, Journey to Damascus, Cursillo, and Flame);
- l. individuals who volunteer in the following types of ministry, programs, or organizations which provide services to, or at which minors, elderly adults, or adults with disabilities may be present, including, but not limited to: (1) Catholic schools; (2) catechesis and faith formation from elementary through high school; (3) Parish nursery and childcare, and mother's day out or pre-school programs; (4) Parish or school sponsored scouting groups, and other youth-focused programs (e.g. vacation bible school, youth sports, and similar activities); (5) homeschooling organizations that use church property; (6) *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*; (7) retreat ministry leaders; (8) liturgical ministries (e.g., adult servers and acolytes, hospitality and usher, children's liturgy, lector, extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, and choir and music ministry); (9) homebound ministry to nursing and assisted-living facilities and Parishioner homes; (10) hospital ministry; (11) Parish office or grounds; (12) St. Vincent de Paul Society conferences; (13) community service and one-on-one support ministries and groups (e.g. Gabriel Project and Stephen Ministry); (14) restorative justice and prison ministry; (15) thrift stores operating on Parish or school property or under the auspices of a Parish or school; (16) food pantry and food distribution programs; (17) elder or respite-care ministry; (18) transportation ministry; (19) Parish men's and women's groups that provide Parish service; and (20) Parish event coordinators (e.g. festival, picnic, and Jamaica leadership).
- m. Schoenstatt Shrine volunteers;
- n. personnel of independent organizations that operate on Parish properties; and

- o. individuals in any ministry or group as specified by a Pastor, principal, or director of a diocesan agency.
212. The following adult individuals need not maintain Safe Environment Program compliance:
- a. Retired members of a religious institute or society of apostolic life who are not in any form of ministry;
 - b. parents who solely observe programs and activities in which their children are involved, and who do not volunteer or otherwise serve in ministry for their children's programs and activities (e.g., join their child for lunch once or twice per year, attend class parties, Mass and school and athletic performances); and
 - c. employees and contractors of companies that provide intermittent, non-ministry services (e.g., plumbing, electrical, and janitorial services) and who are supervised when on Parish or school property and segregated from minors.

Section 3: Compliance Policy for Persons from Other Dioceses

213. An individual from another diocese who wishes to participate in a temporary, occasional ministry or program that requires Safe Environment Program compliance must provide verification of compliance, including a cleared criminal history review and verification of training in a similar program, from their home diocese for review and approval by the Parish, school, or diocesan organization responsible for the program. "Temporary" and "occasional" mean no more than two or three times a year. Examples include, but are not limited to the following:
- a. restorative justice ministry in Texas Department of Correction facilities located in the Diocese;
 - b. retreat-type programs, such as an adult ACTS retreat;
 - c. marriage ministry teams; and
 - d. visiting grandparents wishing to volunteer at their child's school or vacation bible school program.

Section 4: Compliance Requirements for Adults

214. To be compliant, an adult must:
- a. be 18 years of age or older;
 - b. prior to beginning service in any ministry that requires Safe Environment Program compliance, complete the registration process through the Online Volunteer Application for a Background Check on the Diocesan website;
 - c. authorize the Diocese to obtain an initial criminal background check;
 - d. complete the Safe Environment Program Training through the Diocesan website no

- later than the 30th day after beginning service in ministry;
- e. adhere to the Diocese of Corpus Christi policies in the Safe Environment Program Handbook; and
 - f. be classified in the Safe Environment Program database as:
 - i. approved to engage in ministry; or
 - ii. approved with restrictions.
215. Compliance is required as set forth in the Safe Environment Program policy without regard to the mental or physical condition of the person serving in ministry.
216. Compliance with a similar program in another diocese does not qualify as Safe Environment Program compliance in the Diocese for ongoing Parish, Catholic school, or diocesan ministry.
217. If the Diocese, a Parish, or other diocesan organization determines that an individual who must be Safe Environment Program compliant is not compliant, the Diocese, Parish, or other diocesan organization will notify the individual that he or she may not serve in ministry until compliance is reestablished.
218. To maintain compliance, individuals must renew or update the background check and Safe Environment Program training at least once every three years throughout their service in ministry.

Section 5: Compliance Policy for Minors

219. Youth volunteers who are between the ages of 14 to 17 shall submit a Youth Volunteer Application and Parent Consent form to the Diocese. They shall also complete the Safe Environment Training for Youth Volunteers for the Diocese.
220. A minor is not allowed to have the primary responsibility to care or supervise children of the same age or younger.
221. Once a person reaches the age of 18, they are required to submit an adult Volunteer Application for Safe Environment Program compliance. They shall also complete the Safe Environment Training for the Diocese.
222. Anyone participating in youth ministry who turns 18 years of age during the school year may continue to participate in youth ministry activities with their peers as long as they are enrolled in high school and reside in their parent's or guardian's household.

Section 6: Mandated Reporting Law

223. Texas law requires that an individual, who has reasonable cause to believe a person who is currently a minor is being abused, report the information regarding possible abuse to:
- a. any local or state law enforcement agency; or
 - b. the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services by calling the 24-hour abuse hotline at 1-800-252-5400 or filing a report as instructed on the website at www.txabusehotline.org.
224. The requirement to report also pertains to the suspicion of abuse or neglect of an elderly person or person with a disability. An elderly person is defined as a person 65 years of age or older. A person with a disability is defined as a person with a mental, physical, or intellectual or developmental disability that substantially impairs the person's ability to provide adequately for the person's care or protection and who is: 18 years of age or older; or under 18 years of age and who has had the disabilities of minority removed.
225. Professionals must make a report no later than the 48th hour after first suspecting a child has been abused or neglected or is a victim of an offense under Section 21.11, of the Penal Code, regarding indecency with a child. A professional may not delegate to or rely on another person to make the report.
226. Professionals include teachers, nurses, doctors, day-care employees, and others who are either licensed by the state or work in a facility licensed or operated by the state and who have direct contact with children in the course of their job.

Section 7: Guest Speakers and Lay Presenters

227. Clergy guest speakers from outside the Diocese must present the following to the Local Ordinary:
- a. diocesan approved testimony of suitability for ministry from their own diocese or superior;
 - b. proof of training in a similar program in their home diocese; and
 - c. the title and outline of the presentation to be given.
228. The Local Ordinary, or his delegate, is to maintain a list of approved lay presenters, musicians, and bands.
229. The criteria for inclusion in the list of approved lay presenters, musicians, and bands shall be determined by the Local Ordinary at his discretion.
- a. A lay presenter, musician, or band must submit a written request to the Chancellor's office in order to be placed on the approved list.
230. Only lay presenters, musicians, or bands who are on the approved list may present, play, or sing at:

- a. events hosted or sponsored by the Diocesan office;
 - b. events hosted or sponsored by two or more Parishes or other church institutions; or
 - c. events hosted or sponsored by a single Parish or church institution that is advertised outside of the Parish or institution's regular media.
231. Events are deemed to be "hosted" when they occur on the property of the institution or Parish. They are deemed to be "sponsored" when they are paid for, planned, or carried out by the Parish or institution.
232. The Diocesan list of approved presenters may have restrictions related to the approval (for example, subject matter, location, or audience restrictions). If no restrictions apply, the presenter may be engaged for any topic before any audience provided, however, the Parish or Diocesan office should be prudent in engaging the appropriate presenter based on the presenter's qualifications and expertise. To request a change to restrictions, a presenter may submit additional information to the Chancellor's Office as appropriate.
233. Inclusion of a name on the Diocesan list of approved presenters is not an endorsement of the presenter or the presenter's qualifications. It is intended to determine only whether there exists a cause that the presenter should not make a presentation at an event.
234. Lay presenters, musicians, or bands must comply with either the Safe Environment Program requirements in the Diocese or provide verification of Safe Environment compliance with a similar program from their home diocese.
235. The Diocesan Bishop retains the discretion, for any reason, to deny or restrict any person from publicly speaking on Parish property or at a Parish event.