



**Policy for the Safety of Children in Matters of Sexual Abuse (Revised 2026)
and
Standards of Conduct for Ministry (Revised 2026)**

Diocese of Cleveland
Decree No. 529/2026
Effective Date: 1 January 2027

WHEREAS, by virtue of Canon 391 §§1-2 of the *Code of Canon Law*, the Diocesan Bishop possesses legislative, executive, and judicial authority in the particular Church entrusted to his care;

WHEREAS, the Church has a continuing obligation to provide for the protection of minors and vulnerable persons, to foster environments marked by integrity, accountability, and respect for human dignity, and to ensure that those who serve in ecclesiastical ministry conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church and the responsibilities entrusted to them;

WHEREAS, developments in the universal law of the Church, the particular law applicable in the United States, and related safeguarding standards and procedures, including the revision of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* in June 2026, warrant the revision of the Diocese of Cleveland's safeguarding policies and ministerial standards;

THEREFORE, having consulted the Diocesan Review Board, sought due canonical and civil counsel, and heard the Presbyteral Council, I, Edward C. Malesic, Bishop of Cleveland, by virtue of the authority entrusted to me by Canon 391 §§1-2, hereby promulgate the revised *Policy for the Safety of Children in Matters of Sexual Abuse* and the revised *Standards of Conduct for Ministry* as particular legislation for the Diocese of Cleveland.

These documents are promulgated together as complementary diocesan norms intended to promote the protection of minors and vulnerable persons, ethical ministry, accountability, and safe ecclesial environments throughout the Diocese of Cleveland.

This decree, together with the revised *Policy for the Safety of Children in Matters of Sexual Abuse* and the revised *Standards of Conduct for Ministry*, shall take effect on 1 January 2027.

From that date, the *Policy for the Safety of Children in Matters of Sexual Abuse* promulgated on June 15, 2016, the *Standards of Conduct for Ministry* promulgated in 2016, together with any prior versions thereof, are hereby superseded and replaced. Any diocesan policies, regulations, directives, guidelines, or particular laws contrary to, inconsistent with, or superseded by the present *Policy* or *Standards* are hereby abrogated.

The *Policy* and the *Standards* shall govern all persons, entities, ministries, institutions, and apostolates to which they apply according to their respective terms.

The *Policy* and the *Standards* shall be interpreted and applied in harmony with the universal law of the Church, applicable particular law, and applicable civil law. Nothing therein shall be construed to authorize conduct prohibited by canon law or civil law. In the event of a conflict between the provisions of either document and a higher norm of ecclesiastical law, the higher norm shall prevail. Questions concerning interpretation or application shall be referred to the Diocesan Bishop or to the person designated by him for that purpose.

The Diocesan Bishop reserves the right to amend, supplement, interpret, or otherwise revise the *Policy* or the *Standards* whenever he judges it necessary for the protection of minors and vulnerable persons, for conformity with canon law, or for the good of the Diocese.

The Office for the Protection of Children and Youth shall provide for the implementation, education, training, and periodic review of the *Policy* and shall assist diocesan entities in their observance. The requirements concerning VIRTUS compliance, safe-environment training, criminal-record checks, and related screening measures shall be implemented in accordance with the implementation schedule contained in Appendix 5 of the *Policy*, and any amendments thereto lawfully approved by the Diocesan Bishop. Notwithstanding the effective date of this decree, those requirements shall become binding upon the categories of persons identified in Appendix 5 of the *Policy* only upon the expiration of their applicable implementation period. All other provisions of this decree, the *Policy*, and the *Standards* shall take effect and be binding on 1 January 2027. All persons to whom the *Policy* or the *Standards* apply are required to observe their provisions faithfully.

The Chancellor shall publish this decree, the revised *Policy for the Safety of Children in Matters of Sexual Abuse*, and the revised *Standards of Conduct for Ministry* in the *Diocesan Memorandum* and shall preserve the authentic promulgated texts in the diocesan archives.

Given at the Chancery of the Diocese of Cleveland on this 1st day of November, in the Year of Our Lord 2026.



Most Reverend Edward C. Malesic, J.C.L.
Bishop of Cleveland



Vincent Gardiner, J.C.D.
Chancellor