



*Catholic Diocese of Sioux Falls*

**DIOCESAN POLICY:**

**CONFORMING WITH THE  
CHURCH'S TEACHING ON  
HUMAN SEXUALITY  
IN  
EDUCATION SETTINGS**

*Effective July 1, 2022*



## Rationale for a Policy

All entities of the Catholic Church are created for the purpose of furthering the saving mission of Jesus Christ and must operate in accord with the truth revealed by God in both natural law and divine revelation. In particular, the teaching ministries of the Church must remain in the fullness of the truth in order to carry out their proper mission:

Since true education must strive for complete formation of the human person that looks to his or her final end as well as to the common good of societies, children and youth are to be nurtured in such a way that they are able to develop their physical, moral, and intellectual talents harmoniously, acquire a more perfect sense of responsibility and right use of freedom, and are formed to participate actively in social life (Code of Canon Law, c. 795).

These truths extend into every facet of our lives, including—and perhaps especially—our sexuality.

Regarding sexuality and sexual identity, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) states: “By creating the human being man and woman, God gives personal dignity equally to the one and the other. Each of them, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity” (CCC 2360-2363). By its very nature, sexuality is ordered to the conjugal love of a man and woman within the bond of marriage (c. 1055). And marriage, which is a partnership of the whole of life, is always ordered by its very nature to both the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children (ibid.). Therefore, all persons are called to chastity, to be lived out according to one’s state in life (CCC 2337-2359).

Pope Francis has repeatedly stressed the importance of a proper understanding of our sexuality, warning of the challenge posed by “the various forms of an ideology of gender that denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences” (Encyclical Letter *Amoris Laetitia*, #56). Pope Francis further notes that “biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated,” and that although we must always be “understanding of human weakness and the complexities of life,” that does not require us to “accept ideologies that attempt to sunder what are inseparable aspects of reality” (ibid.).

Ultimately, “[w]e are creatures, and not omnipotent,” and we must accept and respect our humanity “as it was created” (ibid.; see also Genesis 1:27, Matthew 19:4, and Mark 10:6). The Holy Father then stresses that “the young need to be helped to accept their own body as it was created,” so that “we can joyfully accept the specific gifts of another man or woman, the work of God the Creator” (*Amoris Laetitia*, #285).

As Pope Francis notes, we must always respect the sacred dignity of each individual person, but that does not mean the Church must accept the confused notions of gender ideology. We must not demean or deny the sincerity and struggle of those who experience same-sex attraction or who feel his/her true gender identity is different from his/her biological sex. Rather, we seek to accompany them on their journey of life, offering them the light of the Gospel as they try to find their way forward.

These truths are not merely faith based; rather, such realities are also knowable through the use of properly functioning senses and right reason (Pope St. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, #22). We do not serve anyone’s greater good by falsifying the truth, for it is only the truth that frees us for the full life that God offers to each of us. Thus, when a person experiences same-sex attraction or some form of gender dysphoria, such struggles do not change the biological fact of how God created that person, and it would be untruthful for the Catholic Church or our Catholic schools to pretend otherwise.

The policies of our parishes and Catholic schools, therefore, must reflect these fundamental truths. It is the expectation that all students, parents, employees and guests at Catholic parish and Catholic school facilities respect these policies as a condition of their presence at Catholic school facilities.



Ultimately, the following expectations and boundaries are a compilation of what the Church teaches us to be in the best interest of your child and the children entrusted to the care of Church ministries.

## **Policy: Affirming our Human Sexuality**

### **Bullying/Harassment/Violence and Human Sexuality**

All persons have inherent human dignity and are thus deserving of innate respect as a person. Bullying, harassment, or threats or acts of violence against any student based on that student's perceived sex, same-sex attraction, or perceived gender identity, will not be tolerated.

### **Chastity**

All persons are called to chastity in accordance with his/her state in life. For purposes of the school environment, chastity also encompasses modesty in language, appearance, dress, and behavior. Accordingly, romantic or sexual displays of affection are generally not permitted at school.

### **Sexual Orientation and Same-Sex Attraction**

Students may not advocate, celebrate, or express same-sex attraction in such a way as to cause confusion or distraction in the context of Catholic school classes, activities, or events. When discussing homosexuality or homosexual inclinations, the use of the term "same-sex attraction" is preferred, as it is a more appropriate description in accordance with the truths of Catholic faith and morals. For the purposes of this policy, advocating for civil unions between individuals of the same sex and/or civil rights to be granted to the individuals participating in the union shall be considered equivalent to advocating for individuals experiencing same-sex attraction.

### **Gender Dysphoria (Transgenderism)**

Students may not advocate, celebrate, or express transgenderism in such a way as to cause confusion or distraction in the context of Catholic school classes, activities, or events (Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Male and Female He Created Them*, #30-32, 2019).

All policies shall reflect appropriate considerations for individuals experiencing gender dysphoria. These accommodations shall, however, be held to strict limits. To the degree it is possible, these limits are to be made known to all parents so that informed decisions can be made while they journey with their child who is experiencing gender dysphoria.

See also the accompanying appendices which give more specific directives on the limited accommodation that is to be provided to individuals experiencing gender dysphoria in parishes and schools.

### **Documentation**

Sacramental records, certificates, diplomas, transcripts, school records, and any other official documents of the parish or parochial school shall be issued in conformity with the student's biological sex as determined from conception and manifest at birth and at the time of the student's enrollment.

Official school documents are also historical documents and, as such, must accurately reflect the name and identity of the alumnus/alumna during the time in which he/she was enrolled at and graduated from the school. If after graduation an alumnus/alumna legally changes his/her name, for whatever reason, and requests new versions of his/her official school documents, the official school documents may be issued in the following format: "Original Name, n.k.a. New Legal Name."



## **Definitions**

For all policies of the Diocese of Sioux Falls, the following definitions apply:

- **Gender** is a person's identity as either being male or female and is harmonious with one's biological sex at birth; for the purposes of these guidelines, gender in no way implies an attitude, feeling or behavior that culture attributes to a biological sex.
- **Gender dysphoria** or *gender identity disorder* is the psychiatric or psychological condition of experiencing a strong desire to be a person of the opposite gender.
- **Identity** is who we are in God's sight.
- **Marriage** is matrimony by which one man and one woman unite for a lifelong partnership for the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children.
- **Sex** means the biological condition of being male or female as determined from conception and manifest at birth; we receive our sex upon our creation as a gift from God who makes us in His own image and likeness.
- **Sexual identity** references the objective fact that we are rooted in our nature as either female or male persons.
- **Transitioning** refers to an individual who has begun a process by which he or she undergoes physical and other changes to outwardly portray a change in their gender. Often individuals identify themselves as "transitioning" when in fact they are still discerning whether to pursue internal feelings they harbor and submit to physical changes.
- **Transitioned** refers to an individual who senses that he or she has completed a process of changing his or her physical appearance and lifestyle and publicly declares oneself as of the opposite gender.
- **Transgender lifestyle** refers to an individual who regularly and publicly demonstrates behaviors that are consistent with the other gender or that violate cultural norms for personal conduct.
- **Transgenderism** refers to the belief that an individual has the ability to change his or her gender. This belief is inconsistent with our anthropological reality as human beings, and it holds significant moral consequences.



## **Essential Pastoral Guidance to Administrators as They Implement these Policies:**

- All persons are children of God deserving of respect and are to be treated with charity and dignity.
- This policy is not meant to serve as grounds for judging others. Instead, it is offered as an invitation to any persons struggling with gender dysphoria to see themselves as God does.
- All of us, whether in official roles or seeking to witness our Christian beliefs, should seek to counsel as early as possible individuals who experience gender dysphoria, especially explaining Church teachings based on the natural law.
- Furthermore, when accompanying those who face confusion or loss, we should include the invitation of Jesus Christ: “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 16:24-25). As this outreach is offered to these individuals, many others, especially children, are affected. This factor must guide such pastoral accompaniment.
- It is important to note that youth in their formative years struggle with many issues of identity and acceptance, which maturity, education and, when necessary, counseling offer guidance and support. In some instances, it may be important for administrators to support and, where appropriate, refer for psychological counseling/therapy that accords with Catholic anthropology and teaching and aims to help students discover and resolve the underlying issues that gave rise to their perceived incongruence between their biological sex and perceived gender identity, and supports them as they learn to accept and align their sense of self with their biological sex.
- Material cooperation and scandal must be avoided. Pastors and school administrators are called to remain mindful that cooperation with individuals experiencing gender dysphoria can be viewed by the parish or school community as an implicit form of endorsement.



APPENDIX A:

CONSIDERATIONS  
WHEN SERVING INDIVIDUALS  
EXPERIENCING GENDER DYSPHORIA  
IN CATHOLIC, PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS



## **Policy:**

While all persons are children of God and welcome to serve in or attend the parochial schools of the diocese, all who teach, assist or attend Catholic schools agree to abide by the teachings of the Church while in this protected environment. This is reflected in enrollment and tuition documentation provided to prospective parents. It is also reflected on teacher contracts and job descriptions provided to prospective employees. Any failure to uphold Church teachings in their words or actions will result in an invitation to change behaviors. If a student or staff member chooses not to comply with the expectations set forth in this policy, the privilege to attend the Catholic school or serve in an employed position for the school will be taken away.

Therefore, regarding **enrollment**:

- All Christian faithful have a duty to understand that there is no right to attend Catholic schools. Those who cannot accept these norms have the opportunity to enroll in other schools or forms of education.
- Regarding the admittance or continued enrollment of any student at a Catholic school who claims to be transitioning or transitioned, the bishop is to be consulted and shall serve as the final decision maker.
  - Any such situation should be reported to the bishop through the local pastor or school system administration.
  - The bishop may appoint a committee comprised of clergy and/or lay professionals to advise him on the appropriateness of continued enrollment. The committee may be either standing or *ad hoc* in nature.
- No student shall be admitted, enrolled, or allowed to continue as a student at a Catholic school if that student's expression of gender, sexual identity or sexuality is the cause of confusion of or disruption to other students in the Catholic school system.
  - The Catholic school's mission and its responsibility to all parents shall at all times be viewed as the greater consideration than a school administration's concern for any one student.
- It should be emphasized that all persons have inherent human dignity and are thus deserving of innate respect. Bullying, harassment, or threats of violence against any student as defined by civil law for any reason will not be tolerated in Catholic schools. Individuals found to be responsible for such unacceptable behavior shall be confronted. Law enforcement shall be notified of any such behavior.



Regarding specific **considerations** when serving individuals experiencing gender dysphoria:

- School records must be maintained at all times in ways that conform to the student's sex as given to them by God.
- Students are to wear only those uniforms and conform to all dress codes in accord with his or her biological sex.
- Student access to facilities and overnight accommodations will align with his/her sex.
  - Regarding the use of restrooms, a child's sex shall determine which designated restroom shall be used by all students. Boys are only to use restrooms designated "boys" or "men," and girls are only to use restrooms designated "girls" or "women" within the school building.
    - This policy shall be seen explicitly as a protection to those students who go to use his/her assigned bathroom and who would be made to feel uncomfortable by the presence of someone of the opposite sex in the same space.
  - No "transgender bathroom" shall be created or designated by a school.
- All students, teachers, and school personnel must use accurate gender references and language in all circumstances and at all times.
  - No references to an individual student through the use of a pronoun that correlates to the opposite sex shall be made by teachers, administrators, and staff members. (*e.g.* Christopher will always be "he," "him," etc. and Theresa will always be "she," "her," etc.)
  - Whenever a class/schoolmate of a student experiencing gender dysphoria uses a pronoun that is inconsistent with the student's sex, this behavior shall be addressed immediately with instruction given to refrain from using the incorrect gender-specific pronoun.
  - When a student who discloses that he/she is experiencing gender dysphoria, his/her proper name shall always be an acceptable and proper reference for that student so long as the name reflects what is on the child's birth certificate. If the student has legally changed his/her name, proper documentation to support this change must be provided before the changed name is to be used in the context of the school.
- If physical education classes involve changing into workout clothes, the policy on locker room use in extracurricular activities shall apply.
- While pastoral sensitivity is necessary, Catholic school administrators are not to provide material or other forms of assistance to youth in furtherance or support of a transitioning process or a transitioned status.
  - This preclusion explicitly applies to any investments made in physical structure that is meant to provide accommodation for a youth claiming to be transitioning or transitioned. No funds, no matter their source, may be spent by a school for this purpose.



### **Athletic/Extracurricular Activities:**

School administrations are advised that these guidelines anticipate that a school may receive a requested accommodation or be directed to provide such accommodation under the threat of regulatory or legal pressures. The duress of such pressure shall not be used as justification for providing accommodation beyond what is contained in this policy. Legal counsel is prepared to defend the conscience protections provided to a Catholic school under civil law.

Regarding all extracurricular activities offered through the Catholic school:

- Students shall be eligible to participate only in those school-sponsored teams and activities that are consistent with his/her sex. Boys can only participate in boys activities/teams, and girls may only participate on girls activities/teams.
- The shared use of restrooms or locker rooms by any students of the opposite gender shall be strictly forbidden.
- When hosting a team which is comprised of one or more individuals whose gender is opposite his/her teammates for extracurricular competitions, a Catholic school shall only provide accommodation to the extent this policy allows.
  - Visiting teams are to be advised that a locker room may not be available for their use during competitions. Further, they are to be advised that alternative locations for dressing for the competition may need to be secured by the visiting team.

### **Liturgies:**

Recognizing the potential of scandal and confusion of the faithful regarding Church teachings, those who choose to live a transgender lifestyle publicly and declare such his/her intent in either word or action may not serve as lectors, music ministers, or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion during liturgies celebrated at a Catholic school.

While this policy is intentionally exclusionary, it is essential to note that this same reality exists for any member of the parish whose actions place them in a state of grave sin or public scandal (sex outside of marriage, cohabitation, homosexual union, etc.). All persons may attend liturgies, consistent with the norms of the Church.



## **Employment:**

Our teachers, administrators, and staff members serve in ministerial roles and agree, by the terms of their employment (contracts, handbook, and/or job description), to promote Catholic ministry, beliefs, teachings, message, and faith in word and deed, including avoiding any conduct conflicting with the promotion of the Catholic ministry, beliefs, teachings, and faith.

Recognizing the potential for scandal, those living a transgender lifestyle, those considering making a transition, or those transitioning are not eligible to carry out employed ministry on behalf of a parochial school.

Particular consideration for this expectation must be given when evaluating candidates for positions that involve direct ministry with youth and which have a high probability of the adult spending extended time alone with youth (*e.g.* counseling, teaching, teacher aide, or coaching positions).

## **Sponsorship of Outside Organizations:**

Parishes and schools may not sponsor, charter, or provide meeting space for any organization that violates the definition of marriage, sex, or gender as indicated above.

Schools are required to ensure that the sponsored organization's participation policy reflects or, at a minimum does not contradict, beliefs taught by the Church and/or any policies of the diocese. Schools may not provide accommodations to any outside group which exceed those that have been identified as permissible according to these diocesan guidelines.

## **Role of the Pastor:**

- The pastor of any student or adult asking for accommodations based on gender dysphoria shall be included in the discernment over whether the school can provide what has been requested.
- The pastor of any student or adult whose behavior contradicts this policy shall be included in any discussion that intends to invite the individual to change his/her behaviors. If the pastor is unable or unwilling, he shall designate an alternate cleric who is to participate in the discussion.



## Appendix B

# CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SERVING INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING GENDER DYSPHORIA IN PARISH MINISTRIES



## **The Sacraments:**

A bishop is obliged to regulate the rights of the faithful to the sacraments as the common good demands (CIC 223).

With regards to the sacraments, these are a right if the candidate is properly prepared and predisposed to receive them. The faithful have the right to know the authentic teachings of the Church. Therefore, a pastor has the duty to make known the teachings of the Church in their fullness.

In the instance of individuals requesting the sacraments when the individual and/or those requesting on his or her behalf are professing to live a transgendered lifestyle, the following critical considerations should be taken into account before deciding whether to offer the sacrament.

### *Baptism of Infants:*

The Baptism of children, including children entrusted to a parent who is transgendered, is to be encouraged. Yet, as the rite requires, there must be well-founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the faith. Otherwise the administering of the sacrament should be postponed. Such assurance may be garnered through godparents, extended family and the community.

See below regarding the selection of sponsors or godparents.

### *Baptism of Adults:*

Adults must accept the teachings of the Church when requesting baptism for themselves. Those who are living a transgender lifestyle, considering transitioning, or undergoing transitions should be delayed until Church teachings are fully understood and professed as being accepted.

See below regarding the selection of sponsors or godparents.

### *Confirmation:*

Those living a transgender lifestyle, considering transitioning, or have begun transitioning should be delayed until Church teachings are accepted.

See below regarding the selection of sponsors or godparents.

### *Godparents and Sponsors:*

Those confirmed adults living a transgender lifestyle or currently transitioning may not serve as a baptismal or confirmation sponsor.

### *Holy Eucharist:*

Mindful that the Most Holy Eucharist represents the source and summit of our Catholic faith and that the Church's mission is to make known the tenets of faith:

- those publicly living a transgender lifestyle or undergoing a transition are to refrain from receiving until they fully accept the teachings of the Church, whereas
- those who are privately harboring thoughts about transitioning or are otherwise experiencing the symptoms consistent with gender dysphoria are invited to receive.



*Penance:*

The confessor is to determine whether there is sufficient repentance for absolution.

*Holy Orders:*

Only those with male birth gender may be accepted as seminarians or ordained. Having undergone gender change surgery is an impediment.

*Weddings:*

Individuals living a transgender lifestyle or currently transitioning may not serve as members of the bridal party (bridesmaids or groomsmen).

*Sacramental Records:*

No indication of self-determined change in gender may be recorded in baptismal records.

With the bishop's permission, the pastor may make a notation regarding an individual received into the Church who later undergoes sexual reassignment surgery due to congenital intersex condition or gender identity disorder in the baptismal register. The notation states the reason for the sexual reassignment and what the person is now referred to as.

Example: "Sexual reassignment has occurred due to gender identity disorder/congenital intersex condition; now to be referred to as 'Patricia Maria Smith'." This is not a change to the baptismal record, only a notation of what has transpired for understanding of the person.

Changes in legal names are to be indicated as a notation in the margin of the sacramental record. No new record may be created based on legal name change except in the case of legal adoption.

The following comes from a letter by the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts dated November 15, 2007:

It is not allowed to annotate two mothers or two fathers as parents. If one of the partners is the child's natural father or mother, he or she MUST be mentioned in the register; the other partner CANNOT be annotated in any fashion including sponsor or godparent. If the child was adopted, then the partners MUST choose which individual will be annotated.

It is not considered possible by the Church to annotate in the baptismal register a "transgender father" whose real nature is a woman or a "transgender mother" whose real nature is a man.

*Mass of Christian Burial:*

A funeral Mass may be offered for a deceased individual who professed his/her Catholic baptism and who faced gender dysphoria in adulthood, even to the point of public expression of having been "transitioned." However, the funeral shall be prayed in a manner such that no endorsement that the individual "transitioned" is given by the Church and/or the priest celebrant. The individual's given/baptized name shall be used when referencing the deceased.

If the obituary written by the deceased/family members publicly endorses the false notion that he/she "transitioned", it shall not be permitted to be circulated at the liturgy. If a wake is to be prayed in the parish church, particular care is to be taken to ensure that any eulogy or



public remarks made by mourners avoid giving public endorsement that the individual has “transitioned.”

The Bishop shall be consulted by the priest celebrant on funeral plans in advance of the liturgy to ensure that public scandal, to the degree it can be avoided, is avoided in the praying of the funeral (CIC can. 1184 and 1185).

### **Parish Ministries:**

Recognizing the potential of scandal and confusion of the faithful regarding Church teachings, those who choose to live a transgender lifestyle publicly and declare such his/her intent in either word or action may not serve as lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, religious education instructors, council members, or in any other advisory positions carried out on behalf of the parish.

While this policy is intentionally exclusionary, it is essential to note that this same reality exists for any member of the parish whose actions place them in a state of grave sin or public scandal (sex outside of marriage, cohabitation, homosexual union, etc.). All persons may attend liturgies, consistent with the norms of the Church.

### **Employment:**

Recognizing the potential for scandal, those living a transgender lifestyle, those considering making a transition, or those transitioning are not eligible to carry out employed ministry on behalf of any parish, parochial school, or diocesan ministries in the Diocese of Sioux Falls. This is of particular importance when employment involves direct ministry with youth (e.g. counseling, teaching, or coaching positions in schools, religious education, or liturgical ministers in parishes).

This same expectation is to be established for any volunteers.

### **Sponsorship of Outside Organizations:**

Parishes and schools may not sponsor, charter, or provide meeting space for any organization that violates the definition of marriage or gender as indicated above.

Parishes, schools, and institutions that publicly declare to be Catholic are required to ensure that the sponsored organization’s participation policy reflects or is not inconsistent with the beliefs of the Church and policies of the diocese. Parishes and schools are to avoid any and all accommodations that exceed those that have been identified as permissible according to these diocesan guidelines.