

HUMAN DIGNITY – AVOIDANCE OF HARASSMENT

Underlining our basic Catholic social teaching is respect for life. Life is a gift from God and is the clearest reflection of God among us since we are created in God's image and likeness. "Each person possesses a basic dignity that comes from God, not from any human quality or accomplishment, not from race or gender, age or economic status. The test of every institution or policy is whether it enhances or threatens human life or human dignity." (USCC 1995)

The Catholic school environment must, therefore, be a community of faith which "shows reverence and love for every person." (John Paul II 1991) Staff, students and community members involved with the Catholic school must create an environment which is conducive to transforming all humanity and one that is free from harassment or intimidation of any type (including sexual harassment, racial harassment, bullying or hazing).

The Catholic school shall maintain an environment for all staff, volunteers, students, and community members which is free from harassment of any kind, including physical, racial or sexual harassment.

1. Definitions of Harassment

- a. Sexual harassment refers to sexually inappropriate behavior that is not welcome, that is personally offensive to some, and fails to respect the rights of others. Harassment can be either conduct or communication: e.g. sexually inappropriate touching, gestures, or language of a sexual nature directed at faculty, staff or other students. Sexual harassment also includes conduct or communication that has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with another student's education, or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment.
- b. Racial Harassment includes making negative reference to a person's cultural or racial background and/or creating a hostile or offensive educational environment through such conduct.
- c. Physical or Other Forms of Harassment of any nature include any conduct which may reasonably be offensive to others in an educational organization.
- d. Bullying is a form of harassment. For purposes of this policy, "bullying" is defined as: The repeated intimidation of others by the real or threatened infliction of physical, verbal, written, electronically transmitted, or emotional abuse or through attacks on the property of another. It may include, but not be limited to, actions such as verbal taunts, name-calling and put-downs, including ethnically-based or gender-based put-downs, extortion of money or possessions, and exclusions from peer groups within the school. Such conduct is disruptive to the educational process and, therefore bullying is not acceptable behavior within the school or at any school-sponsored functions.
- e. Hazing means any intentional, knowing, or reckless act meant to induce physical pain, embarrassment, humiliation, deprivation of rights that creates physical or mental discomfort that is directed towards a student for the purpose of being initiated into, affirming with, sponsored or supported by the school and whose membership is totally or predominately other students from the school. Soliciting, encouraging, aiding or engaging in "hazing" on or in any school property at any time, or in connection with any activity supported or sponsored by the school, whether on or off school property, is strictly prohibited.

2. Disciplinary Consequences for Violation of Human Dignity Policy

- a. Student who engage in any acts of sexual, racial, physical, bullying or hazing types of harassment while at school, at any school function, or in connection to or with any school-sponsored activity or event, or while in route to or from school, are subject to disciplinary action up to and including suspension or expulsion. As may be required by the law, law enforcement officials shall be notified of serious incidents.
- b. This policy shall not be interpreted to prohibit a reasoned or civil exchange of opinions or debate, protected by state or federal law.

3. Reporting of Incidents

- a. Any student who feels that he or she has been a victim of harassment, should bring the matter to the immediate attention of the assistant principal. The student may also bring the matter to any staff member who will be required to report the incident to the assistant principal.

- b. The assistant principal will investigate all complaints of harassment in as prompt and confidential a manner as possible and will take appropriate corrective action when warranted.
 - i. The student who alleges harassment should report the incident immediately to the assistant principal or staff member.
 - ii. A written report using, Human Dignity Policy Report Form which can be found on the lmclaker.org website under either the middle or high school page is to be completed, preferably by the student who feels they have been harassed and their parents.
 - iii. The assistant principal will institute a process to investigate the complaint. The investigation should take place immediately and be concluded within a reasonable time.
 - iv. If through the investigation process it is found that a violation did in fact occur, appropriate disciplinary consequences will be issued by the assistant principal.
 - v. If in the event the alleged victim is not satisfied with the investigation and results, they may bring the matter before the executive director/middle-high principal for a hearing.

Human Dignity Policy Report Form

Lake Michigan Catholic Schools and the Diocese of Kalamazoo maintain a firm policy that prohibits all forms of harassment. All persons are to be treated with respect and dignity. Harassment by any person, male or female, which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment, will not be tolerated under any circumstances. If you feel you have been a victim of harassment, we ask that you complete this form and return it to the middle-high school assistant principal as soon as possible. **An investigation will not commence without this form being completed and turned into the Asst. Principal.**

Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Home Telephone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Date(s) of alleged incident(s): _____

Name of person(s) you believe harassed you: _____

List and witnesses that were present: _____

Where did the alleged incident(s) occur? _____

Describe the alleged incidents(s) as clearly as possible, including such things as what force, if any, was used; any verbal statements (i.e. threats, requests, demands); what, if any, physical contact was involved; what did you do to avoid the situation, etc. (Attach additional pages if necessary.)

This complaint is filed based on my honest belief that _____ has harassed me. I hereby certify that the information I have provided in this complaint is true, correct, and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Received by Signature: _____ Date: _____

Assistant Principal Signature: _____ Date: _____