INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

This handbook is designed to acquaint you with the Diocese of Brownsville and provide you with information about working conditions, employee benefits, and some of the policies affecting your employment. You should read, understand, and comply with all provisions of the handbook. It describes many of your responsibilities as an employee and outlines the programs developed by the Diocese of Brownsville to benefit employees. One of our objectives is to provide a work environment that is conducive to both personal and professional growth.

No employee handbook can anticipate every circumstance or question about policy. As the Diocese of Brownsville continues to grow, the need may arise and the Diocese of Brownsville reserves the right to revise, supplement, or rescind any policies or portion of the handbook from time to time as it deems appropriate, in its sole and absolute discretion. The only exception to any changes is our employment-at-will policy permitting you or the Diocese of Brownsville to end our relationship for any reason at any time. Employees will, of course, be notified of such changes to the handbook as they occur.
101 Nature of Employment
Employment with the Diocese of Brownsville is voluntarily entered into, and the employee is free to resign at will at any time, with or without cause. Similarly, the Diocese of Brownsville may terminate the employment relationship at will at any time, with or without cause, so long as there is no violation of applicable federal or state law.

Policies set forth in this handbook are not intended to create a contract, nor are they to be construed to constitute contractual obligations of any kind or a contract of employment between the Diocese of Brownsville and any of its employees. The provisions of the handbook have been developed at the discretion of management and, except for its policy of employment-at-will, may be amended or cancelled at any time, at the Diocese of Brownsville’s sole discretion.

These provisions supersede all existing policies and practices and may not be amended or added to without the express written approval of the Bishop of the Diocese of Brownsville.
CONFIDENTIAL NATURE OF DIOCESAN AFFAIRS

Policy: It is the policy of the Diocese of Brownsville that the internal business affairs of the organization, particularly confidential information, represent Diocesan assets that each employee has a continuing obligation to protect.

Information designated as confidential may not be discussed with anyone outside the organization and may be discussed within the organization only on a “need to know” basis. In addition, employees have a responsibility to avoid unnecessary disclosure of non-confidential internal information about the Diocese, its parishioners and its suppliers. Accordingly, the Diocese may prohibit the use of cameras, including camera phones, in restrooms or other designated areas in order to secure employee privacy and other confidential business information. However, this employee responsibility to safeguard internal Diocesan affairs is not intended to impede normal business communications and relationships.

Employees authorized to have access to confidential information may be required to sign special nondisclosure agreements and must treat the information as proprietary Diocesan property for which they are personally responsible. Employees are prohibited from attempting to obtain confidential information for which they have not received authorization. Employees violating this policy will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination, and may be subject to legal action.

The Moderators of the Curia are responsible for coordinating the security and control of Diocesan information and for approving any exceptions to this policy. Directors are responsible for identifying information that should be classified as confidential and should work closely with the Moderators of the Curia to develop procedures to secure and control that information. Information that is identified as confidential should be clearly designated and properly secured. A list of employees authorized to have access to the information should be prepared, and all access should be recorded.

All media inquiries and other inquiries of a general nature should be referred to the Public Relations Director. In addition, all press releases, publications, speeches, or other official declarations must be approved in advance by the Bishop of Brownsville. Further, questions about employee references or other information concerning current or former employees should be referred to the Human Resources Department.
102 Employee Relations

If employees have concerns about work conditions, they are strongly encouraged to voice these concerns openly and directly to their supervisors. Our experience has shown that when employees deal openly and directly with supervisors, the work environment can be excellent, communications can be clear, and attitudes can be positive. We believe that the Diocese of Brownsville amply demonstrates its commitment to employees by responding effectively to employee concerns.
104 Business Ethics and Conduct

The successful fulfillment of the mission of the Diocese of Brownsville is dependent on the principles of ethical conduct of our employees. Because the nature of our work is to provide services to the people of the Diocese of Brownsville, it requires careful observance of the spirit and letter of all applicable laws and regulations, as well as a scrupulous regard for the highest standards of conduct and personal integrity.

The Diocese of Brownsville will comply with all applicable laws and regulations and expects its executive personnel, directors, and employees to conduct business in accordance with the letter, spirit, and intent of all relevant laws and to refrain from any illegal, dishonest, or unethical conduct.

In general, the use of good judgment, based on high ethical principles, will guide you with respect to lines of acceptable conduct. If a situation arises where it is difficult to determine the proper course of action, the matter should be discussed openly with your immediate supervisor and, if necessary, with the Human Resources Director for advice and consultation.

Compliance with this policy of ethics and conduct is the responsibility of every employee of the Diocese of Brownsville. Disregarding or failing to comply with this standard of business ethics and conduct could lead to disciplinary action, up to and including possible termination of employment.

See Appendix 1 for further details on ethical behavior.
105 Hiring of Relatives

The employment of relatives in the same area of an organization may cause serious conflicts and problems with favoritism and employee morale. In addition to claims of partiality in treatment at work, personal conflicts from outside the work environment can be carried into day-to-day working relationships.

Relatives of persons currently employed by the central offices of the Diocese of Brownsville will not be considered for employment with the central offices of the Diocese of Brownsville. However, relatives will be considered for employment with any of the other diocesan entities such as the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle or the San Juan Nursing Home. If the relative relationship is established after employment, the individuals concerned will decide who is to be transferred. If that decision is not made within 30 calendar days, management will decide.

In other cases where a conflict or the potential for conflict arises, even if there is no supervisory relationship involved, the parties may be separated by reassignment or terminated from employment.

For the purpose of this policy, a relative is any person who is the employee’s spouse, brother, sister, parents, children, step-children, father-in-law, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, grandparents, grandchildren or any other person who is related by blood or marriage.
106 Employee Medical Examinations

To help ensure that employees are able to perform their duties safely, medical examinations may be required.

After an offer has been made to an applicant entering a designated job category – building maintenance, groundskeeper or any other job category that will require physical exertion –, a medical examination will be performed at the expense of the Diocese of Brownsville. The examination will be performed by a health professional recommended by the Diocese of Brownsville, or by a health professional of the applicant’s choice. The offer of employment and assignment to duties is contingent upon satisfactory completion of the exam.

Information on an employee’s medical condition or history will be kept separate from other employee information and maintained confidentially. Access to this information will be limited to those who have a legitimate need to know.
107 Immigration Law Compliance

The Diocese of Brownsville is committed to employing only United States citizens and aliens who are authorized to work in the United States and does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of citizenship or national origin.

In compliance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, each new employee, as a condition of employment, must complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9 and present documentation establishing identity and employment eligibility. Former employees who are rehired must also complete the form if they have not completed an I-9 with the Diocese of Brownsville within the past three years, or if their previous I-9 is no longer retained or valid.

Employees with questions or seeking more information on immigration law issues are encouraged to contact the Human Resources Director. Employees may raise questions or complaints about immigration law compliance without fear of reprisal.
Employees have an obligation to carry out their responsibilities within guidelines that prohibit actual or potential conflicts of interest. This policy establishes only the framework within which the Diocese of Brownsville wishes its ministries to operate. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide general direction so that employees can seek further clarification on issues related to the subject of acceptable standards of operation. Contact the Human Resources Director for more information or questions about conflicts of interest.

Transactions with outside firms must be conducted within a framework established and controlled by the executive level of the Diocese of Brownsville. Business dealings with outside firms should not result in unusual gains for those firms. Unusual gain refers to bribes, special fringe benefits, and unusual price breaks, and other windfalls designed to ultimately benefit the employer, the employee, or both. Promotional plans that could be interpreted to involve unusual gain require specific executive-level approval.

An actual or potential conflict of interest occurs when an employee is in a position to influence a decision that may result in a personal gain for that employee or for a relative as a result of operating decisions of the Diocese. For the purpose of this policy, a relative is any person who is the employee’s spouse, brother, sister, parents, children, step-children, father-in-law, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, grandparents, grandchildren or any other person who is related by blood or marriage.

No “presumption of guilt” is created by the mere existence of a relationship with outside firms. However, if employees have any influence on transactions involving purchases, contracts, or leases, it is imperative that they disclose to an officer of the Diocese of Brownsville as soon as possible the existence of any actual or potential conflict of interest so that safeguards can be established to protect all parties.

Personal gain may result not only in cases where an employee or relative has a significant ownership in a firm with which the Diocese of Brownsville does business, but also when an employee or relative receives any kickback, bribe, substantial gift, or special consideration as a result of any transaction or business dealings involving the Diocese of Brownsville.
109 Complaints Received from Third Parties

Complaints should never be received personally but always and immediately referred, according to the following provisions: Complaints of a minor nature against church personnel should be referred to the appropriate supervisor and/or Human Resources. Complaints or allegations of a minor or major nature concerning or affecting the clergy (priests, deacons) should always and immediately be referred directly to the Bishop or to the Vicar General in the Bishop's absence.

Compliance with this policy is the responsibility of every employee of the Diocese of Brownsville. Disregarding or failing to comply with this policy could lead to disciplinary action, up to and including possible termination of employment.

See Appendix 1 (Policies for Ethical and Responsible Conduct in Ministry)
110 Outside Employment

Employees may hold outside jobs as long as they meet the performance standards of their job with the Diocese of Brownsville. All employees will be judged by the same performance standards and will be subject to scheduling demands of the Diocese of Brownsville, regardless of any existing outside work requirements.

If the Diocese of Brownsville determines that an employee’s outside work interferes with performance or the ability to meet the requirements of the Diocese of Brownsville as they are modified from time to time, the employee may be asked to terminate the outside employment if he or she wishes to remain with the Diocese of Brownsville.

Outside employment that constitutes a conflict of interest is prohibited. Employees may not receive any income or material gain (honorariums) from individuals outside the Diocese of Brownsville for services rendered while performing their jobs.
111 Solicitation Policy

Purpose: To ensure that any employee solicitations are conducted under established guidelines.

Scope: This policy and procedure applies to all diocesan employees. 
Note: For the purpose of this policy, solicit is defined as any approach or request made to an employee which is not part of or associated with the normal duties of his/her position with the Diocese of Brownsville or with functions of the Diocese.

Policy: Employees may solicit other employees:
   A. Before and/or after working hours
   B. In the break rooms only during lunch periods and scheduled break or relief periods (of both the soliciting employee and the employee being solicited) for non commercial items such as girl scout cookies, school fund raisers, raffle tickets, etc.
   C. Commercial/business solicitation (for profit) such as jewelry, clothing, equipment, etc. is prohibited on Diocese premises

Employees may not solicit other employees in any Diocesan area during working hours except for charitable events approved in writing by the Bishop of the Diocese of Brownsville.

Special collection activities, such as collections toward gifts for employees who are celebrating some special occasion or leaving the Diocese, and which are not made on a Dioceses wide basis may be permitted with the approval of the Director concerned.

When an employee is hospitalized for three or more consecutive days or in the event of an employee’s death or death of a member of his immediate family, flowers are sent by the Diocese in the name of all Diocesan clergy, directors and employees.

PROCEDURE: Any director or supervisor noticing an employee or an outsider endeavoring to solicit in violation of the solicitation policy should inform the persons involved of the Diocese’ policy and see that the solicitation is ceased. Whenever possible, this should be done with another director or supervisor present.

All solicitation violations should be reported to the Human Resources Director.

Following any incident involving violations of the solicitation policy, a written report should be forwarded (signed by the director or supervisor involved and the witness) to the Human Resources Director.
114 Disability Accommodation

The Diocese of Brownsville is committed to complying fully with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and/or any state or local law and ensuring equal opportunity in employment for qualified persons with disabilities. All employment practices and activities are conducted on a non-discriminatory basis.

Hiring procedures have been reviewed and provide persons with disabilities meaningful employment opportunities. Pre-employment inquiries are made only regarding an applicant's ability to perform the duties of the position.

Post-offer medical examinations are required only for those positions in which there is a bona fide job-related physical requirement. They are given to all persons entering the position only after conditional job offers. Medical records will be kept separate and confidential.

Reasonable accommodation is available to all disabled employees, where their disability affects the performance of job functions. All employment decisions are based on the merits of the situation in accordance with defined criteria, not the disability of the individual.

Qualified individuals with disabilities – a qualified individual with a disability is described by the ADA as “an individual who has the requisite skills, experience, education and other job-related requirements and who can perform the essential functions of the job, with or without reasonable accommodation” – are entitled to equal pay and other forms of compensation (or changes in compensation) as well as FLSA classifications, lines of progression, and seniority lists. Leave of all types will be available to all employees on an equal basis.
116 Job Posting and Employee Referrals

The Diocese of Brownsville provides employees an opportunity to indicate their interest in open positions and advance within the organization according to their skills and experience. In general, notices of all regular, full-time job openings are posted, although the Diocese of Brownsville reserves its discretionary right to not post a particular opening.

Job openings will be posted on the employee bulletin board and in the e-mail system, and normally remain open for 15 days. Each job posting notice will include the dates of the posting period, job title, department, location, grade level, job summary, essential duties, and qualifications (required skills and abilities).

To be eligible to apply for a posted job, employees must have performed competently for at least 180 calendar days in their current position. Employees who have a written warning on file, or are on probation or suspension are not eligible to apply for posted jobs. Eligible employees can only apply for those posted jobs for which they possess the required skills, competencies, and qualifications.

To apply for an open position, employees should submit a job posting application to the Human Resources Director listing job-related skills and accomplishments. It should also describe how their current experience with the Diocese of Brownsville and prior work experience and/or education qualifies them for the position.

An applicant’s supervisor may be contacted to verify performance, skills, and attendance. Any staffing limitations or other circumstances that might affect a prospective transfer may also be discussed.

Job posting is a way to inform employees of openings and to identify qualified and interested applicants who might not otherwise be known to the hiring manager. Other recruiting sources may also be used to fill open positions in the best interest of the organization.

In some cases it may become a business necessity to offer an external applicant a salary higher than an incumbent based on the level of experience and education they offer.
201 Employment Categories

It is the intent of the Diocese of Brownsville to clarify the definitions of employment classifications so that employees understand their employment status and benefit eligibility. These classifications do not guarantee employment for any specified period of time. Accordingly, the right to terminate the employment relationship at will at any time is retained by both the employee and the Diocese of Brownsville.

Each employee is designated as either NONEXEMPT or EXEMPT from federal and state wage and hour laws. NONEXEMPT employees are entitled to overtime pay under the specific provisions of federal and state laws. EXEMPT employees are excluded from specific provisions of federal and state wage and hour laws. An employee's EXEMPT or NONEXEMPT Classification may be changed only upon written notification by the Diocese of Brownsville management.

In addition to the above categories, each employee will belong to one other employment category:

**REGULAR FULL-TIME** employees are those who are not in a temporary or introductory status and who are regularly scheduled to work the Diocese of Brownsville’s full-time schedule. Generally, they are eligible for the Diocese of Brownsville’s benefit package, subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each benefit program.

**REGULAR PART-TIME** employees are those who are not assigned to a temporary or introductory status and who are regularly scheduled to work less than the full-time work schedule, but at least 30 hours per week. Regular part-time employees are eligible for some benefits sponsored by the Diocese of Brownsville, subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each benefit program.

**PART-TIME** employees are those who are not assigned to a temporary or introductory status and who are regularly scheduled to work less than 30 hours per week. While they do receive all legally mandated benefits (such as Social Security and worker’s compensation insurance), they are ineligible for all of the Diocese of Brownsville’s other benefits.

**INTRODUCTORY** employees are those whose performance is being evaluated to determine whether further employment with the Diocese of Brownsville is appropriate. Employees who satisfactorily complete the introductory period will be notified of their new employment classification.

**TEMPORARY** employees are those who are hired as interim replacements, to temporarily supplement the work force, or to assist in the completion of a specific project. Employment assignments in this category are of a limited duration. Employment beyond any initially stated period does not in any way imply a change in employment status. Temporary employees retain that status unless and until notified of a change. While temporary employees receive all legally mandated benefits (such as worker’s
compensation insurance and Social Security), they are ineligible for all of the Diocese of Brownsville’s other benefits.

202 Access to Personnel Files

The Diocese of Brownsville maintains a personnel file on each employee. The personnel file includes such information as the employee’s job application, resume, records of training, documentation of performance appraisals and salary increases, and other employment records.

Personnel files are the property of the Diocese of Brownsville, and access to the information they contain is restricted. Generally, only supervisors and management personnel of the Diocese of Brownsville who have a legitimate reason to review information in a file are allowed to do so.

Employees who wish to review their own file should contact the Human Resources Director. With reasonable advance notice, employees may review their own personnel file in the Diocese of Brownsville’s offices and in the presence of an individual appointed by the Diocese of Brownsville to maintain the files.
203 Employment Reference Checks

To ensure that individuals who join the Diocese of Brownsville are well qualified and have a strong potential to be productive and successful, it is the policy of the Diocese of Brownsville to check the employment references of all applicants.

Once an employee leaves the diocese, the Human Resources Director will respond in writing only to those reference check inquiries that are submitted in writing. Responses to such inquiries will confirm only dates of employment and position(s) held. No employment date will be released without a written authorization and release signed by the individual who is the subject of the inquiry.
204 Personnel Data Changes

It is the responsibility of each employee to promptly notify the Diocese of Brownsville of any changes in personnel data. Personal mailing addresses, telephone numbers, number and names of dependents, individuals to be contacted in the event of an emergency, educational accomplishments, and other such status reports should be accurate and current at all times. If any personnel data has changed, notify the Human Resources Director.
205 Introductory Period

The introductory period is intended to give new employees the opportunity to
demonstrate their ability to achieve a satisfactory level of performance and to determine
whether the new position meets their expectations. The Diocese of Brownsville uses this
period to evaluate employee capabilities, work habits, and overall performance. Either
the employee or the Diocese of Brownsville may end the employment relationship at will
at any time during or after the introductory period, with or without cause or advance
notice.

All new and rehired employees work on an introductory basis for the first 180 calendar
days after their date of hire. Employees who are promoted or transferred with the
Diocese of Brownsville must complete a secondary introductory period of the same
length with each reassignment to a new position. Any significant absence will
automatically extend an introductory period by the length of the absence. If the Diocese
of Brownsville determines that the designated introductory period does not allow
sufficient time to thoroughly evaluate the employee’s performance, the introductory
period may be extended for a specific period.

In cases of promotions or transfers within the Diocese of Brownsville, an employee who,
in the sole judgment of management, is not successful in the new position can be
removed from that position at any time during the secondary introductory period. If this
occurs, the employee may be allowed to return to his or her former job or to a comparable
job for which the employee is qualified, depending on the availability of such positions
and the Diocese of Brownsville’s needs.

Upon satisfactory completion of the initial introductory period, employees enter the
“regular” employment classification.

During the initial introductory period, new employees are eligible for those benefits that
are required by law, such as workers’ compensation insurance and Social Security. After
becoming regular employees, they may also be eligible for other benefits provided by the
Diocese of Brownsville, subject to the terms and conditions of each benefits program.
Employees should read the information for each specific benefits program for the details
on eligibility requirements.

Benefits eligibility and employment status are not changed during the secondary
introductory period that results from a promotion or transfer within the Diocese of
Brownsville.

Rehired employees will be credited with their prior years of service after completing the
initial six months probation period. Although Catholic schools, parishes, and other
diocesan organizations are separate and distinct entities, employees transferring from a
parish or school or other diocesan entity will be credited with their prior years of service
for benefit purposes.
208 Employment Applications

The Diocese of Brownsville relies upon the accuracy of information contained in the employment application, as well as the accuracy of other data presented throughout the hiring process and employment. Any misrepresentations, falsifications, or material omissions in any of this information or data may result in the Diocese of Brownsville’s exclusion of the individual from further consideration for employment or, if the person has been hired, termination of employment.
209 Performance Evaluation

Supervisors and employees are strongly encouraged to discuss job performance and goals on an informal, day-to-day basis. Formal performance evaluations are conducted at the end of an employee’s initial period in any new position. This period, known as the introductory period, allows the supervisor and the employee to discuss job tasks, identify and correct weaknesses, encourage and recognize strengths, and discuss job tasks, identify and correct weaknesses, encourage and recognize strengths, and discuss positive, purposeful approaches for meeting goals.

The performance of all employees is generally evaluated according to an ongoing 12-month cycle, beginning at the calendar-year end.

Merit-based pay adjustments are awarded by the Diocese of Brownsville in an effort to recognize truly superior employee performance. The decision to award such an adjustment is dependent upon numerous factors, including the information documented by this formal performance evaluation process.
301 Employee Benefits

Eligible employees of the Diocese of Brownsville are provided a wide range of benefits. A number of the programs (such as social security, worker’s compensation) cover all employees in the manner prescribed by law.

Benefits eligibility is dependent upon a variety of factors, including employee classification. Your supervisor can identify the programs for which you are eligible. Details of many of these programs can be found elsewhere in the employee handbook.

The following benefit programs are available to eligible employees:

- Auto Mileage
- Bereavement
- Dental Insurance
- Family Leave
- Health Insurance
- Holidays
- Jury Duty Leave
- Life Insurance
- Long-Term Disability
- Medical Leave
- Military Leave
- 403b retirement plan
- Personal leave
- Relocation assistance
- Severance Pay
- Sick Leave Benefits
- Vacation Benefits
- AFLAC (tax deferred premiums)
- Employee Retreat

Some benefit programs require contributions from the employee such as insurance benefits, but most are fully paid by the Diocese of Brownsville.
303 Vacation Benefits

Vacation time off with pay is available to eligible employees to provide opportunity for rest, relaxation, and personal pursuits. Employees in the following employment classification(s) are eligible to use vacation time as described in this policy:

- Regular full-time employees
- Regular part-time employees

The amount of paid vacation full-time employees receive each year increases with the length of their employment as shown in the following schedule:

- After 1 year of eligible service – entitlement is 10 vacation days each year
- After 5 years of eligible service – entitlement is 15 vacation days each year
- After 10 years of eligible service – entitlement is 20 vacation days each year

After completing the first year of employment, part-time employees are entitled to paid vacation time equivalent to the amount of hours they work in one workweek.

The length of eligible service is calculated on the basis of a “benefit year”. This is the 12-month period that begins when the employee starts to earn vacation time. An employee’s benefit year may be extended for any significant leave of absence except military leave of absence. Military leave has no effect on this calculation. (See individual leave of absence policies for more information.)

Once employees enter an eligible employment classification, they begin to earn paid vacation time according to the schedule. Earned vacation time is available for use in the year following its accrual.

Paid vacation time can be used in minimum increments of one-half day. To take vacation, employees should request in advance, approval from their supervisors. Requests will be reviewed based on a number of factors, including business needs and staffing requirements.

Vacation time off is paid at the employee’s base pay rate at the time of vacation. It does not include overtime.

As stated above, employees are encouraged to use available paid vacation time for rest, relaxation, and personal pursuits. In the event that available vacation is not used by the end of the benefit year:

- After 5 years of eligible service - employees are eligible to carry over a maximum of five vacation days per year into the next fiscal year.
- After 10 years of eligible service - employees may carry over a maximum of 10 days into next fiscal year.
This change will be effective 2017. A maximum of 10 days will be allowed to be carried over. Employees will forfeit the remainder of unused time.

Upon termination of employment, employees will be paid for unused vacation time that has been earned through the last day of work.
Sick Leave Benefits

The Diocese of Brownsville provides paid sick leave benefits to all eligible employees for periods of temporary absence due to illnesses or injuries. Eligible employee classification(s):

- Regular full-time employees
- Regular part-time employees

Regular full-time employees will be awarded sick leave benefits at the rate of 10 days per year. Sick leave benefits are calculated on the basis of a “benefit year”, which is actually every fiscal year.

Regular part-time employees will be awarded sick leave based on the amount of hours that are worked during the workweek. The following schedule will be used to calculate sick leave for regular part-time employees:

| If the employee works: | 30 hours a week | 40 hours a week | 10 days at 6 hours a day | 10 days at 8 hours a day |

Paid sick leave can be used in minimum increments of one hour. Eligible employees may use sick leave benefits for an absence due to their own illness or injury or that of a family member who resides in the employee’s household.

Employees who are unable to report to work due to illness or injury should notify their direct supervisor before the scheduled start of their workday if possible. The direct supervisor must also be contacted on each additional day of absence. If an employee is absent for three or more consecutive days due to illness or injury, a physician's statement must be provided verifying the disability and its beginning and expected ending dates. Such verification may be requested for other sick leave absences as well and may be required as a condition to receiving sick leave benefits. Before returning to work from a sick leave absence of three calendar days or more, an employee must provide a physician’s verification that he or she may safely return to work.

Sick leave benefits will be calculated based on the employee’s base pay rate at the time of absence.

Sick leave benefits are intended solely to provide income protection in the event of illness or injury, and may not be used for any other absence. Unused sick days may be rolled over for a maximum of 30 days. Unused sick leave benefits will not be paid to employees while they are employed or upon termination of employment. If an employee has depleted their sick days, they will begin the new fiscal year with 10 days.
305 Holidays

The Diocese of Brownsville will grant holiday time off to all employees on the holidays listed below:

- New Year’s Day (January 1)
- Good Friday (Friday before Easter)
- Easter Monday (Monday after Easter)
- Memorial Day (last Monday in May)
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Labor Day (first Monday in September)
- Thanksgiving (fourth Thursday in November)
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas (December 25)
- Day after Christmas

The Diocese of Brownsville will grant paid holiday time off to all eligible employees immediately upon assignment to an eligible employment classification. Holiday pay will be calculated based on the employee’s straight-time pay rate (as of the date of the holiday) times the number of hours the employee would otherwise have worked on that day. Eligible employee classification(s):

- Regular full-time employees
- Regular part-time employees

A recognized holiday that falls on a Saturday will be observed on the preceding Friday. A recognized holiday that falls on a Sunday will be observed on the following Monday.

If a recognized holiday falls during an eligible employee’s paid absence (such as vacation or sick leave), holiday pay will be provided instead of the paid time off benefit that would otherwise have applied.

**If eligible nonexempt employees work on a recognized holiday, they will receive holiday pay plus wages at one and one-half times their straight-time rate for the hours worked on the holiday.**

Paid time off for holidays will not be counted as hours worked for the purposes of determining overtime.
306 Workers’ Compensation Insurance

The Diocese of Brownsville provides a comprehensive workers’ compensation insurance program at no cost to employees. This program covers any injury or illness sustained in the course of employment that requires medical, surgical, or hospital treatment. Subject to applicable legal requirements, workers’ compensation insurance provides benefits after a short waiting period, or, if the employee is hospitalized, immediately.

Employees who sustain work-related injuries or illnesses should inform their supervisor immediately. No matter how minor an on-the-job injury may appear, it is important that it be reported immediately. This will enable an eligible employee to qualify for coverage as quickly as possible.

Neither the Diocese of Brownsville, nor the insurance carrier will be liable for the payment of workers’ compensation benefits for injuries that occur during an employee’s voluntary participation in any off-duty recreational, social, or athletic activity sponsored by the Diocese of Brownsville.
308 Return to Work Policy

**Purpose:** The primary goal is to get the employee back to the workforce as soon as possible. There is a two-fold benefit effect in returning an employee back to work: 1) benefits cease (or are reduced) and oftentimes the employee’s recovery is hastened. The sooner the employer and employee focus on getting back to work, the more likely it is going to happen. 2) Job restructuring is considered one of the least expensive ways of enabling people with disabilities to do physically demanding jobs. Instead of extensive retooling or remodeling, there is a reconsideration of the individual job and related jobs, to determine whether tasks can be redistributed to make one or more jobs possible for a person with a disability.

Alterations to the content of the job and modifications to the time and place of performance can often make it possible for a person with a disability to carry out its essential functions. That means an earlier return to work for someone out with a disabling injury and chance to retain a high-performing employee in spite of a disability.

**Policy:** To ensure the earliest possible return to work, regardless of the reason for the absence, take these steps, at a minimum:

- Require managers to call absent employees regularly – weekly or biweekly, but not less frequently – to find out how they are progressing. These calls should be a matter of our organization’s policy, and absent employees should expect to get them on a regular basis. If the employee isn’t well enough to talk, the manager should talk to a relative or other caretaker.

- Circulate diocesan newsletter, bulletin board postings, announcements, and invitations to the employee at home. Send a package every week, if there is anything to send, so that news arrives while it is still fresh.

- Encourage co-workers to stay in contact, in person, by phone, or with cards and letters. The warmth of workplace friendship is strong incentive to return quickly to the job.

- Be sure employees know about the Return-to-Work program and the company commitment to light duty, part-time, modified jobs, and alternate jobs. The program should be described in the employee handbook.

- Job restructuring accommodation to a disabled employee. When used as an accommodation, job restructuring does not require the employer to delete an essential function from the job.
311 Jury Duty

The Diocese of Brownsville encourages employees to fulfill their civic responsibilities by serving jury duty when required. Paid leave will be granted to permit employees to serve on a state or federal jury or to appear as a witness in a state or federal court after completing a minimum of 180 calendar days of service in an eligible classification.

Jury duty pay will be calculated on the employee’s base pay rate times the number of hours the employee would otherwise have worked on the day of absence. Employee classifications that qualify for paid jury duty leave are:

- Regular full-time employees
- Regular part-time employees

Employees must show the jury duty summons to their supervisor as soon as possible so that the supervisor may make arrangements to accommodate their absence. Of course, employees are expected to report for work whenever the court schedule permits.

Either the Diocese of Brownsville or the employee may request an excuse from jury duty if, in the Diocese of Brownsville’s judgment, the employee’s absence would create serious operational difficulties.

The Diocese of Brownsville will continue to provide health insurance benefits for the full term of the jury duty absence.

Vacation, sick leave, and holiday benefits will continue to accrue during unpaid jury duty leave.

The employee will be allowed to retain any compensation received for his or her participation in jury selection or actually serving in a jury.
### 314. Cell Phone Usage Policy

**Introduction:** The Diocese of Brownsville recognizes that certain job functions require that an employee be accessible when away from the office or during times outside of scheduled working hours. For these reasons, a monthly cell phone allowance is paid at the end of each month to select employees.

**Guidelines:** Diocese allowance for cell phone usage is assigned to employees that provide at least one of the following two criteria:

1. The job function of the employee requires considerable time outside of their assigned office or work area and it is important to the Diocese that they be accessible during those times.
2. The job function requires the employee to be accessible outside of scheduled or normal working hours.

Simple convenience is not a criterion for cell phone allowance pay. It is the responsibility of the Bishop and/or the Moderator of the Curia to make the determination as to whether an allowance for the usage of a cell phone is warranted.

The list of selected employees that warrant the allowance payment will be reviewed periodically for possible changes.

The use of personal cell phone during the work day for personal calls, texting, e-mailing, web browsing etc. can interfere with employee productivity, and be distracting to others. Any such use of the cell phone or other electronic device should be conducted during breaks and lunch periods. Communication in an emergency situation is allowed. To assist in minimizing personal calls, employees should make family and friends aware of the Diocesan policy for cell phone use.

The State of Texas and the Rio Grande Valley have specific bans on cell phone use while driving. The Diocese of Brownsville policy is to be fully compliant with such bans. Accident statistics show that the use of cell phones while driving distracts a driver’s attention from traffic conditions. To promote driver safety and to help reduce the possibility of vehicle accidents in connection with cell phone use, the Diocese of Brownsville has adopted the following cell phone guidelines applicable to all employees and volunteers:

- Cellular phone calls, both incoming and outgoing, are not permitted at any time while driving a vehicle for diocesan business.
- Diocesan business includes travel between the employee’s work site and external meeting locations, and between external meeting locations and the employee’s work site.
- Accidents occurring while a driver is using a cellular phone may be considered preventable, and subject to disciplinary action.
- A cellular phone’s voicemail feature should be activated to store incoming calls while driving.
- This policy applies to both hand-held and hands-free cell phones.
- All non-emergency calls should be made once the vehicle is safely parked.
- Texting and e-mailing while vehicle is in motion is prohibited.
316 Health Insurance

The Diocese of Brownsville’s health insurance plan provides employees and their dependents access to medical and dental insurance benefits. Employees in the following employment classifications are eligible to participate in the health insurance plan:

- Regular full-time employees
- Regular part-time employees

Eligible employees may participate in the health insurance plan subject to all terms and conditions of the agreement between the Diocese of Brownsville and the insurance carrier.

Details of the health insurance plan are described in the Summary Plan Description (SPD). An SPD will be provided to eligible employees no later than three weeks after enrollment. Contact the Insurance Department for more information about health insurance benefits.

The Diocese of Brownsville does not offer continuation of insurance coverage (COBRA) at termination of employment.
317 Life Insurance

Life insurance offers you and your family important financial protection. The Diocese of Brownsville provides a basic life insurance plan for eligible employees.

Accidental Death and Dismemberment (AD&D) insurance provides protection in cases of serious injury or death resulting from an accident. AD&D insurance coverage is provided as part of the basic life insurance plan.

Employees in the following employment classifications are eligible to participate in the life insurance plan:

- Regular full-time employees
- Regular part-time employees

Eligible employees may participate in the life insurance plan subject to all terms and conditions of the agreement between the Diocese of Brownsville and the insurance carrier.

Details of the basic life insurance plan including benefit amounts are described in the Summary Plan Description provided to eligible employees. Contact the Insurance Department for more information about life insurance benefits.
318 Cafeteria Benefits

The Diocese of Brownsville participates in a section 125 Cafeteria Plan. This allows employees and the Diocese of Brownsville to save the taxes on insurance premiums. Along with the tax savings, a variety of products are offered to employees on a voluntary basis. The employees have options of choosing as many or as few of the products offered. Products include: disability insurance, medical reimbursement accounts, cancer policies, heart and stroke, etc. Most of these products are portable and if and when an employee leaves the Diocese of Brownsville, they can continue with these products independently of the Diocese. Contact the Human Resources Department for more information on the Cafeteria Plan.
401 Timekeeping

Accurately recording time worked is the responsibility of every nonexempt employee. Federal and state laws require employers to keep an accurate record of time worked in order to calculate employee pay and benefits. Time worked is all the time actually spent on the job performing assigned duties.

Nonexempt employees should accurately record the time they begin and end their work, as well as the beginning and ending time of each meal period. They should also record the beginning and ending time of any split shift or departure from work for personal reasons. Overtime work must always be approved before it is performed.

Altering, falsifying, tampering with time records, or recording time on another employee’s time record may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

It is the employees’ responsibility to sign their time records to certify the accuracy of all time recorded. The supervisor will review and then initial the time record before submitting it for payroll processing. In addition, if corrections or modifications are made to the time record, both the employee and the supervisor must verify the accuracy of the changes by initialing the time record.
403 Paydays

Employees are paid bi-weekly. In the event that a regularly scheduled payday falls on a day off such as a holiday, employees will receive pay on the last day of work before the regularly scheduled payday.
405 Employment Termination

Termination of employment is an inevitable part of personnel activity within any organization, and many of the reasons for termination are routine. Below are examples of some of the most common circumstances under which employment is terminated:

- **Resignation** - voluntary employment termination initiated by an employee
- **Discharge** - involuntary employment termination initiated by the organization. An employee who is discharged or whose contract is not renewed because of professional incompetence, habitual absences, tardiness, or uncooperative attitudes must have received regular written evaluation reports which specify the unsatisfactory feature of the employee’s performance and the change required within a stated period of time to meet the expected performance level. Immediate discharge may be necessary due to the serious reasons such as but not limited to:
  - Repeated insubordination
  - Reporting to work under the influence of alcohol or drugs
  - Theft or misappropriation of property of funds belonging to the Diocese, co-workers, or visitors
  - Conduct contrary or detrimental to the religious and professional character of the Diocese, or its policies (i.e. accepting gifts or bribes for services rendered; altering, removing or destroying records; failure to respect confidentiality of records or information; immoral behavior)
  - Flagrant or scandalous misconduct
  - Inappropriate behavior with a minor

When immediate dismissal is necessary, the employee will be notified in person by his or her supervisor. The discharge is to be done in a way, which is fair, just and respects the human dignity of the employee.

- **Layoff** – involuntary employment termination initiated by the organization for non-disciplinary reasons.
- **Retirement** – voluntary employment termination initiated by the employee meeting age, length of service, and any other criteria for retirement from the organization.

The Diocese of Brownsville will generally schedule exit interviews at the time of employment termination. The exit interview will afford an opportunity to discuss such issues as employee benefits, conversion privileges, repayment of outstanding debts to the Diocese of Brownsville, or return of the Diocese of Brownsville-owned property. Suggestions, complaints, and questions can also be voiced.

Since employment with the Diocese of Brownsville is based on mutual consent, both the employee and the Diocese of Brownsville have the right to terminate employment at will, with or without cause, at any time. Employees will receive their final pay in accordance with applicable state law.
Employee benefits will be affected by employment termination in the following manner. All accrued, vested benefits that are due and payable at termination will be paid.

**The Diocese of Brownsville does not participate in Unemployment Compensation Benefits.**
407 Severance Pay

The Diocese of Brownsville provides severance pay to eligible employees whose employment is terminated for reasons that are not prejudicial to the Diocese of Brownsville, as determined by the Diocese of Brownsville in its sole discretion. Severance pay may be provided to the regular full-time employees.

Employees may be considered eligible for severance pay if they have worked full-time for at least one year and are terminated because of:

(a) a permanent reduction in force;
(b) the elimination of the job or position.

Employees will not normally be considered eligible for severance pay if their employment is terminated because of:

(a) an employee-initiated voluntary resignation
(b) misconduct
(c) a breach of employment agreement
(d) a normal retirement.

Employees who are eligible to receive severance pay will do so in the following manner:

(a) employees who have worked one to five years will receive one month’s pay;
(b) employees who have worked over five years will receive over one month’s pay up to the maximum of three month’s pay.

Specifically excluded from benefits under this provision are employees who: were hired as temporary employees for a specified period of time or were offered but refused to accept another suitable position with the organization.
504 Attendance and Punctuality

Policy: It is the policy of the Diocese of Brownsville to require employees to report for work punctually and to work all scheduled hours and any required overtime. Excessive tardiness and poor attendance disrupt workflow and will not be tolerated.

Procedure: Directors and/or supervisors should notify employees of their starting, ending and break times. Employees are expected to be engaged in carrying out their duties during all scheduled work time and should be ready to begin working at their scheduled starting time. Directors and/or supervisors should record all absences and, for nonexempt employees (those subject to the minimum wage and overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act), any tardiness or early departure exceeding ten minutes.

Employees should notify their director/supervisor, as far in advance as possible whenever they are unable to report for work, know they will be late, or must leave early. The notice should include a reason for the absence and an indication of when the employee can be expected to report for work. If the director/supervisor is unavailable, notification should be made to the Human Resources Department.

Employees will be compensated during authorized absences in accordance with the sick leave policy. Nonexempt employees will not receive compensation for time missed because of tardiness or early departure if the time exceeds ten minutes after starting time or before quitting time. Failure to notify the Diocese properly of any absence may result in loss of compensation during the absence and may be grounds for disciplinary action.

Nonexempt employees who are delayed in reporting for work more than thirty minutes and who have not notified their director/supervisor of their expected tardiness may lose their right to work the balance of the work day. In addition, employees who report for work without proper equipment or in improper attire may not be permitted to work. (Refer to Safety and Personal Appearance Policies). Employees, who report for work in a condition considered not fit for work, whether for illness or any other reason, will not be allowed to work (see Drugs, Narcotics and Alcohol Policy).

Employees generally are expected to report for work during inclement weather conditions if the Diocese does not declare an emergency closing. Nonexempt employees who are unable to report because of weather conditions will be granted an authorized unpaid absence. Nonexempt employees who are late because of weather conditions will be given a chance to make up their missed time if work schedules and conditions permit.

Nonexempt employees will not be required or permitted to work any period of time before or after scheduled starting or quitting times for the purpose of making up time lost because of tardiness, unauthorized absence, authorized absence, or any other reason if the result will be that the employee works more than forty hours during the workweek.
Employees must report to their supervisor after being late or absent, give an explanation of the circumstances surrounding their tardiness or absence, and, when applicable, certify that they are fit to return to work. The director/supervisor should record the information and forward to the Human Resources Department and Accounting Department. When appropriate, the director/supervisor should counsel the employee on the importance of good attendance and warn that excessive tardiness or absences will lead to discipline, up to and including termination.

Employees must obtain permission from their director/supervisor in order to leave the Diocese premises during working hours. In addition, employees who are frequently away from the premises for business reasons should inform their directors/supervisors of their whereabouts during working hours.

Unauthorized or excessive absences or tardiness will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. An absence is considered to be unauthorized if the employee has not followed proper notification procedures or the absence has not been properly approved. Generally, absences in excess of more than three times in a three-month period and tardiness or early departures beyond ten minutes of starting or quitting time are grounds for discipline.

Employees who are absent from work for three consecutive days without giving proper notice to the Diocese will be considered as having voluntarily quit. At that time, the Diocese will formally note the termination and advise the employee of the action by certified mail to the employee’s last known address.
505 Smoking

In keeping with the Diocese of Brownsville’s intent to provide a safe and healthful work environment, smoking is prohibited throughout the workplace.

This policy applies equally to all employees, customers, and visitors.
506 Rest and Meal Periods

Each workday, employees are provided with two rest periods of fifteen minutes in length. Rest periods will be provided at 10:00 a.m. and at 3:00 p.m. Since this time is counted and paid as time worked, employees must not be absent from their workstations beyond the allotted rest period time. All full-time regular employees are provided with one meal period of sixty minutes in length each workday.
508 Use of Equipment and Vehicles

Equipment and vehicles essential in accomplishing job duties are expensive and may be difficult to replace. When using property, employees are expected to exercise care, perform required maintenance, and follow all operating instructions, safety standards, and guidelines.

Please notify the supervisor if any equipment, machines, tools, or vehicles appear to be damaged, defective, or in need of repair. Prompt reporting of damages, defects, and the need for repairs could prevent deterioration of equipment and possible injury to employees or others. The supervisor can answer any questions about an employee’s responsibility for maintenance and care of equipment or vehicles used on the job.

The improper, careless, negligent, destructive, or unsafe use or operation of equipment or vehicles, as well as excessive or avoidable traffic and parking violations, can result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
510 Emergency Closings

At times, emergencies such as severe weather, fires, or power failures, can disrupt company operations. In extreme cases, these circumstances may require the closing of a work facility.

When operations are officially closed due to emergency conditions, the time off from scheduled work will be paid.

In cases where an emergency is authorized, employees who are already on leave (vacation, sick leave, etc.) will not receive credit for the hours the Catholic Pastoral Center closes.
TRAVEL POLICY

Policy: It is the policy of the Diocese of Brownsville that business travel must be approved in advance and should be engaged in and reimbursed according to the guidelines below:

1. Employees holding positions that require extensive travel are expected to travel as a condition of employment. For all other positions, travel is considered only an incidental function of the position, but may be required.

2. Supervisors must approve any employee travel in advance. Under normal circumstances, employees should make all travel arrangements for transportation and lodging using the travel agency (ies) specified by the Diocese of Brownsville. Director of HR will designate one staff employee at each location to handle all travel arrangements.

3. Employee expenses for approved travel will be paid or reimbursed when properly documented by the employee and approved by the supervisor.
   - Examples of expenses normally paid or reimbursed include transportation, meals, and lodging.
   - Employees who know or anticipate that they will have a special request for travel expense reimbursement should ask for approval from their supervisor before incurring the expense.
   - In addition, employees will be reimbursed for the travel expenses of their spouses only if management determines that the spouse’s presence has a bona fide business purpose.
   - Receipts must be presented for all reimbursable items. (Items such as personal hygiene products, personal reading materials, unusually large tips and bar tabs, expenses for family members or others that are not on diocesan business, etc. are not reimbursable). Allowances/exceptions with supervisor approval may be made up to $25.

4. Employees may obtain a cash advance for approved business travel by submitting a written request to the Accounting Department. Cash advances are Diocesan property and their use must be properly documented and approved as outlined above. Upon return, employee will present receipts and balance of cash to Accounting Office.

5. Time spent by non-exempt employees (those covered by the minimum wage and overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act) traveling away from home on Diocesan business during normal working hours is considered hours worked for pay purposes. If a seminar is more than one day, the workday ceases at the time the seminar is over and begins again when the seminar resumes.

6. Employees traveling on Diocesan business are representatives of the Diocese. They are expected to maintain a high level of professionalism and to follow the Diocesan policies and regulations.
514 Visitors in the Workplace

All visitors should enter the Diocese of Brownsville at the reception area(s). Visitors will receive directions or be escorted to their destination. Employees are responsible for the conduct and safety of their visitors.

If an unauthorized individual is observed on the Diocese of Brownsville’s premises, employees should immediately notify their supervisor or, if necessary, direct the individual to the reception area.
516 Computer and E-mail Usage

Computers, computer files, the e-mail system, and software furnished to employees are the property of the Diocese of Brownsville intended for business use. Employees should not use a password, access a file, or retrieve any stored communication without authorization.

The Diocese of Brownsville strives to maintain a workplace free of harassment and sensitive to the diversity of its employees. Therefore, the Diocese of Brownsville prohibits the use of computers and the e-mail system in ways that are disruptive, offensive to others, or harmful to morale.

The Diocese of Brownsville purchases and licenses the use of various computer software for business purposes and does not own the copyright to this software or its related documentation. Unless authorized by the software developer, the Diocese of Brownsville does not have the right to reproduce such software for use on more than one computer.

Employees may only use software on local area networks or on multiple machines according to the software license agreement. The Diocese of Brownsville prohibits the illegal duplication of software and its related documentation.

Employees should notify their immediate supervisor, the Director of Computers and Information Systems or any member of management upon learning of violations of this policy. Employees who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
517 Computer Hardware and Software Policy

A. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide general guidelines governing the safeguarding and utilizing of computer hardware and software.

B. Hardware

1. All computer equipment should be safeguarded from damage, which may be caused, by any of the following:
   a. exposure to extremely high temperature or direct sunlight
   b. exposure to extremely low temperatures
   c. direct spills of liquids on computer components

2. Components of a computer system (i.e. Video Display Unit, Printer, Mouse, etc.) should not be exchanged with other systems without approval from the Computer and Information Department.

3. No unauthorized maintenance should be performed on equipment either by employees or outside consultants.

C. Software

1. All software installed on a computer system must have the appropriate license and/or original disks for that software.
2. Personal work (e.g. research papers, reports, etc.) is not allowed.
3. Safeguard your passwords. The system allows you access and rights to your files based on your password.
4. Computer games not related to the church will be removed from all machines.
5. Disks used to transfer information to and from home computers should be scanned for viruses before reusing on diocesan computers. Updates to virus protection files will be provided via the LAN/WAN where applicable and it will be the users responsibility to update files.
6. It is the user’s responsibility to inform the System Administrator of any unauthorized access to information so that the security breech can be corrected.

D. Internet

1. On-line time should be used for official purposes only.
2. Files for downloads may contain computer viruses; ensure that file is certified not to have viruses or that you are receiving the file from a reliable source. If you do not know who sent you the e-mail do not download any attached files.
518 E-Mail Policy

The Diocese of Brownsville has established a policy with regard to access and disclosure of electronic mail messages created, sent, or received by Diocesan employees using the Diocese’s electronic mail system.

The Diocese of Brownsville intends to honor the policies set forth below, but must reserve the right to change them at any time as may be required under the circumstances.

- The Diocese of Brownsville maintains and electronic mail system. This system is provided by the DOB to assist in the conduct of business within the Diocese.
- The electronic mail system hardware is Diocesan property. They are not the private property of the employee.
- The use of the electronic mail system is reserved solely for the conduct of business at the DOB. It may not be used for personal business.
- The electronic mail system may not be used to solicit for commercial ventures, proselytize for non-job related solicitations.
- The electronic mail system is not to be used to solicit for commercial ventures, proselytize for religious causes (unrelated to the Catholic Church), political causes, outside organizations, or other non-job related solicitations.
- The electronic mail system is not to be used to create any offensive or disruptive messages. Among those which are considered offensive are any messages which contain sexual implications, racial slurs, gender-specific comments, or any other comment that offensively addresses someone’s age, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, national origin, or disability.
- The electronic mail system shall not be used to send (upload) or receive (download) copyrighted materials, trade secrets, proprietary financial information, or similar materials without prior authorization.
- The DOB reserves and intends to exercise the right to review, audit, intercept, access, and disclose all messages created, received, or sent over the electronic mail system for any purpose. The contents of electronic mail properly obtained for legitimate business purposes may be disclosed without the permission of the employee.
- The confidentiality of any message should not be assumed. Even when a message is erased, it is still possible to retrieve and read that message. Further, the use of passwords for security does not guarantee confidentiality. All passwords must be disclosed to the DOB or they are invalid and cannot be used.
- Notwithstanding the DOB’s right to retrieve and read any electronic mail messages, such messages should be treated as confidential by other employees and accessed only by the intended recipient. Employees are not authorized to retrieve or read any e-mail messages that are not sent to them. Any exception to this policy must receive prior approval by the DOB.
- Employees shall not use a code, access a file, or retrieve any stored information unless authorized to do so. Employees should not attempt to gain access to another employee’s messages without the latter’s permission. All computer pass
codes must be provided to supervisors. No pass code may be used that is unknown to the DOB.

- Any employee who violates this policy or uses the electronic mail system for improper purposes shall be subject to discipline, up to and including discharge.
519 Social Media Policy

I. Policy Coverage.

With the continuing evolution of new media and next generation communications tools, the way in which the Diocese, parishes, schools, employees, and students can communicate internally and externally continues to develop at a rapid pace. While this creates new opportunities for communication and collaboration, it also creates new responsibilities. This policy has been developed to define the responsibilities of parishes, schools, and other affiliates in the use of these communication tools.

II. Authorization.

A parish, school, or affiliate (such as cemeteries) may have a social media presence only with the expressed, written consent of the pastor, principal, or affiliate director.

III. Accountability.

Each site must have at least two site administrators, a primary and a back-up, who can monitor and, if necessary, respond timely to communication on the site. All administrators must be adults who have been screened and had a background check. (Similar to the expectations of our parent chaperones). Passwords and names of sites should be registered in a central location, and more than one adult should have access to this information (i.e., site administrators and the pastor and/or principal).

IV. Official Sponsorship.

Electronic communications coming from a parish, school, or affiliate must be made through officially-sponsored technology meaning the entity being represented has to own the site, service, or account. In furtherance of this policy:

1. Every parish, school, or affiliate, to the extent that it has a website, must have its own appropriate domain (website address, also known as a URL).
   - Example: www.hsparish.org for Holy Spirit Parish McAllen

2. Any electronic communication coming from a parish, school, or affiliate must be on a domain for the corresponding parish, school, or affiliate.
   - Example: Secretary@hsparish.org, Info@hsparish.org.
   - Priests are encouraged to use an email from either the Diocese (cdob.org) or one with the parish name incorporated.
   - It is expected that parish staff eliminate the use of free domains such as AOL, Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo and other such services when representing the parish via email correspondence. Adherence to this recommendation will establish an authenticity of the correspondence and reduce the potential for misrepresentation/impersonation.
3. Personal sites, email addresses, etc., must never be employed as a substitute. For example, a Facebook announcement regarding an event for parish youth must be through a Facebook page for the parish, not a youth minister’s personal Facebook page.

4. All clergy and personnel are encouraged to archive email and calendar activities affiliated with church business or pastoral care.

5. The Diocese of Brownsville maintains a record of all unit domains and email addresses of primary staff/volunteers and passwords. This information should be provided annually during the directory update process conducted by the diocesan director of communications. The Diocese of Brownsville reserves the right to modify postings as it deems necessary.

6. Every effort should be made to channel facebook pages (ministries) through a central administrator – The Diocesan IT Director.

7. Official web pages must incorporate a brief but immediately apparent Code of Conduct for visitors to the page. Anyone who does not abide by the Code of Conduct should be blocked by the page administrator.

V. Adult Electronic Interaction with Minors.

Electronic communication with minors must not be undertaken lightly. School, parish, and organization employees and volunteers must consistently adhere to Catholic values and transparency with respect to such communications.

1. All communication with minors (in person, via social media, websites, text messages, etc.) must adhere to:
   - The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (http://www.ftc.gov/ogc/coppa1.htm)

2. Adults must not be in electronic communication with youth (under 18) unless the parents/guardians have authorized the communication. The authorization must identify the type of communication (e.g., email), the youth’s specific contact information (e.g., email address), and contact information for the parents/guardians to ensure they receive copies of such communications. Parents must have access to everything provided to their children and be made aware of how social media is being used, be told how to access the sites, and be given the opportunity to be copied on all material sent to their children via social networking (including text messages).

3. Electronic copies of communications with minors must be preserved.
4. Schools receiving federal funding for computer technology through E-Rate must comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), 47 U.S.C. § 254(h)(5), which requires monitoring internet use by minors; filters to restrict access to obscenity, child pornography, or other material harmful to minors; and educating minors about appropriate online behavior, social networking safety, and cyberbullying.

VI. Transparency, Honesty, and Discretion in the Use of Social Media on Behalf of Parishes, Schools, or Organizations.

Employees and volunteers are responsible for the information they divulge through social media. Employees and volunteers are subject to the following rules when posting information in connection with a parish, school, or organization:

1. Be honest about the facts and your identity.

2. Do not claim to represent the official position of the organization or the teachings of the Church unless authorized to do so.

3. Do not disclose confidential or proprietary information. Think carefully about whether the information being disclosed is ready for public consumption.

4. Do not disclose information protected from disclosure by law, such as medical information about employees or their identifying information (e.g., social security number).

5. Do not use diocesan, school, parish, or organizational trademarks or logos unless you are specifically authorized to do so.

6. Use good taste and discretion in all communication, including the content of photos and videos. Ensure that all content and links comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act which, among other things, prohibits content that is obscene, pornographic, or otherwise harmful to minors.

7. Never cite others, or post text, photos, or videos of another person without permission.
   - Abide by civil law, including intellectual property protections, copyright and fair use laws, and IRS financial disclosure regulations.

8. Include a disclaimer stating that the views expressed are your own and not those of the diocese, or your parish, school, or organization, when commenting on an issue if you do not have specific authorization to speak on behalf of the Diocese, or your parish, school, or organization.

9. Do not violate the terms of agreement of the social media platform you are using.
10. Do not post pictures or video without first obtaining a signed Media Relations/Promotion Form for each individual shown.
   - Do not post pictures, video, or any other information that may identify a minor (e.g., name or contact information) without first obtaining permission from the parent or guardian and a signed Media Relations/Promotion Form.

11. Obtain parental/guardian permission for in-classroom social media activities.

VII. Adhering to the Church’s Doctrines and Teachings and to Diocesan/Parish Policies and Guidelines.

The content of electronic communication must not be at variance with the doctrinal and moral teaching of the Church. All communication by means of social media by parish/school/organization personnel is a reflection on the employee’s parish/school/organization, as well as on the entire Diocese. As a result, this communication must be representative of the policies and practices of the Diocese of Brownsville. The following rules have been adopted to support the foregoing policy:

1. Write in thoughtful language consistent with the message of Diocese of Brownsville and the Catholic faith.

2. Do not utter insults, slurs, or obscenities. Do not post anything that might be viewed as pornographic, proprietary, harassing, abusive, or creating a hostile work environment.

3. Do not disparage other individuals, other community groups, or other faiths.

4. Understand that electronic communications and social media activities are subject to other personnel policies, including non-discrimination/non-harassment and electronic communications policies.

5. Report social media activities that potentially violate this policy.

VIII. Personal Use of Social Media.

Personal sites of church and school personnel should reflect Catholic values. Church and school personnel must understand that they are witnessing to the faith through all of their social networking, whether “public” or “private.” In furtherance of this policy, the Diocese has adopted the following rules:

1. "Friending" youth on social networks can be misinterpreted. Diocesan policy is to prohibit teachers, priests, and other employees from using their personal blogs, web pages, Facebook accounts, or e-mail to communicate with students or other parish youth. Such communications, if any, must be through officially sponsored social media pages to which the Diocese has access.

2. Employees and volunteers must exercise care with respect to privacy settings, personal profile information, and posted content to ensure that their use of social
media and the internet does not reflect poorly on the churches, schools, or organizations for whom they work or conflict with Catholic beliefs and values.

3. Employees and volunteers must not identify themselves as employees or volunteers of the diocese or of any particular parish, school, or organization within the diocese on their personal social media pages unless they include a clear disclaimer stating "The views expressed on this site are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer."

4. Employees are not permitted to use the logos, trademarks, official photographs, or any other intellectual property of the Diocese of Brownsville or its parishes (churches), schools, organizations, or programs in their personal blogs, web pages, or social media activities.
522 Workplace Violence Program

The Diocese of Brownsville is committed to preventing workplace violence and to maintaining a safe work environment. Given the increasing violence in society in general, the DOB has adopted the following guidelines to deal with intimidation, harassment, or other threats of (or actual) violence that may occur during business hours or on its premises.

All employees, including supervisors and temporary employees, should be treated with courtesy and respect at all times. Employees are expected to refrain from fighting, "horseplay", or other conduct that may be dangerous to others. Firearms, weapons, and other dangerous or hazardous devices or substances are prohibited from the premises of the DOB without proper authorization.

Conduct that threatens, intimidates, or coerces another employee, or a member of the public at any time, including off-duty periods, will not be tolerated. This prohibition includes all acts of harassment, including harassment that is based on an individual’s sex, race, age, or any characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law.

All threats of (or actual) violence, both direct and indirect, should be reported as soon as possible to your immediate supervisor or any other member of management. This includes threats by employees, as well as threats by solicitors, or other members of the public. When reporting a threat of violence, you should be as specific and detailed as possible.

All suspicious individuals or activities should also be reported as soon as possible to a supervisor. Do not place yourself in peril. If you see or hear a commotion or disturbance near your workstation, do not try to intercede or see what is happening.

The DOB will promptly and thoroughly investigate all reports of threats of (or actual) violence and of suspicious individuals or activities. The identity of the individual making a report will be protected as much as is practical. In order to maintain workplace safety and the integrity of its investigation, the DOB may suspend employees, either with or without pay, pending investigation.

Anyone determined to be responsible for threats of (or actual) violence or other conduct that is in violation of these guidelines will be subject to prompt disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

The DOB encourages employees to bring their disputes or differences with other employees to the attention of their supervisors or the Human Resources Director before the situation escalates into potential violence. The DOB is eager to assist in the resolution of employee disputes, and will not discipline employees for raising such concerns.
602 Family Medical Leave

The Diocese of Brownsville provides family leaves of absence without pay to eligible employees who wish to take time off from work duties to fulfill family obligations relating directly to childbirth, adoption, or placement of a foster child; or to care for a child, spouse, or parent with a serious health condition. A serious health condition means an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility; or continuing treatment by a health care provider.

Employees in the following employment classifications are eligible to request family leave as described in this policy:

- Regular full-time employees
- Regular part-time employees

Eligible employees may request family leave only after having completed 180 calendar days of service. Eligible employees should make requests for family leave to their supervisors at least 15 days in advance of foreseeable events and as soon as possible for unforeseeable events.

Employees requesting family leave related to the serious health condition of a child, spouse, or parent may be required to submit a health care provider’s statement verifying the need for a family leave to provide care, its beginning and expected dates, and the estimated time required.

Eligible employees may request up to a maximum of 12 weeks of family leave within any 12-month period. If this initial period of absence proves insufficient, consideration will be given to a written request for a single extension of no more than 30 calendar days. Employees will be required to first use any accrued paid leave time before taking unpaid family leave. Married employee couples may be restricted to a combined total of 12 weeks leave within any 12-month period for childbirth, adoption, or placement of a foster child; or to care for a parent with a serious health condition.

Subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of the applicable plans, the DOB will continue to provide health insurance benefits for the full period of the approved family leave.

Benefit accruals, such as vacation, sick leave, and holiday benefits will continue during the approved family leave period.

So that an employee’s return to work can be properly scheduled, an employee on family leave is requested to provide the DOB with at least two weeks advance notice of the date the employee intends to return to work. When family leave ends, the employee will be reinstated to the same position, if it is available, or to an equivalent position for which the employee is qualified. If an employee fails to return to work on the agreed upon return date, the DOB will assume that the employee has resigned.
603 Personal Leave

The Diocese of Brownsville provides paid leave of absence to eligible employees who wish to take time off from work duties to fulfill personal obligations. Employees in the following employment classification(s) are eligible to request personal leave as described in this policy:

- Regular full-time employees
- Regular part-time employees

Eligible employees may request personal leave only after having completed 180 calendar days of service. As soon as eligible employees become aware of the need for a personal leave of absence, they should request a leave from their supervisor.

Eligible employees are granted two working days of personal leave every fiscal year.

Requests for personal leave will be evaluated based on a number of factors, including anticipated workload requirements and staffing considerations during the proposed period of absence.
607 Pregnancy-Related Absences

The Diocese of Brownsville will not discriminate against any employee who requests an excused absence for medical disabilities associated with pregnancy. An additional ten working days with pay are allowed for mother or father at childbirth or adoption of an infant.
701 Employee Conduct and Work Rules

To ensure orderly operations and provide the best possible work environment, the Diocese of Brownsville expects employees to follow rules of conduct that will protect the interests and safety of all employees and the organization.

It is not possible to list all the forms of behavior that are considered unacceptable in the workplace. The following are examples of infractions of rules of conduct that may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment:

- Theft or inappropriate removal or possession of property
- Falsification of timekeeping records
- Working under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Possession, distribution, sale, transfer, or use of alcohol or illegal drugs in the workplace, while on duty, or while operating employer-owned vehicles or equipment
- Fighting or threatening violence in the workplace
- Boisterous or disruptive activity in the workplace
- Negligence or improper conduct leading to damage of employer-owned or customer-owned property
- Insubordination or other disrespectful conduct
- Sexual or other unlawful or unwelcome harassment
- Possession of dangerous or unauthorized materials, such as explosives or firearms, in the workplace.
- Excessive absenteeism or any absence without notice
- Unauthorized absence from work station during the workday
- Unauthorized disclosure of business “secrets” or confidential information
- Violation of personnel policies
- Unsatisfactory performance or conduct

Employment with the DOB is at the mutual consent of the DOB and the employee, and either party may terminate that relationship at any time, with or without cause, and with or without advance notice.

See Appendix 1 (Policies for Ethical and Responsible Conduct in Ministry)
702 Drug/Substance and Alcohol Abuse Policy

The Diocese of Brownsville recognizes the rights of individuals to conduct their personal lives, as they desire. However, the conduct of employees while on Diocese premises or while representing the Diocese reflects on the Diocese’s image.

For the guidance of all employees of the Diocese of Brownsville (hereinafter referred to as the (“Diocese”), the following information is set forth to affirm the Drug/Substance and Alcohol Abuse Policy of the Diocese.

**Purpose and Scope of Drug/Substance and Alcohol Abuse Policy:**
The Diocese is committed to providing and maintaining a safe and productive work environment and affirmative image for its contacts and the public. The use of drugs/substance or alcohol by Diocesan employees can adversely affect the productivity of the Diocesan employees, the quality of services provided by Diocese employees, and the image of the Diocese as viewed by the public.

Therefore, the Diocese has established and will enforce a Drug/Substance and Alcohol Abuse Policy not only for the purpose of emphasizing its aforesaid commitment but also for the purpose of requiring each employee of the Diocese to accept his or her responsibility in connection with said commitment. The Drug/Substance and Alcohol Abuse Policy of the Diocese apply to each employee of the Diocese, without exception.

**Statement of Drug/Substance and Alcohol Abuse Policy:**
Simply stated, the Drug/Substance and Alcohol Abuse Policy of the Diocese prohibits a Diocesan employee from using or being under the influence of or possessing or selling or distributing any “drug/substance” as defined herein during work hours or while on Diocese premises or while in a Diocesan vehicle or while otherwise on the job.

For the purpose of the Drug/Substance and Alcohol Abuse Policy of the Diocese, the term “drug” is defined as any alcoholic beverage or any illegal drug or any illegal inhalant or any prescription drug not taken as directed pursuant to a prescription by the employee’s physician. However, for the purpose of said Drug/Substance and Alcohol Abuse Policy, the term “drug” does not include a prescription drug taken as directed pursuant to a prescription by the employee’s physician.

**Pre-Employment Drug/Substance and Alcohol Testing:**
To effectuate the Drug/Substance and Alcohol Abuse Policy of the Diocese, each applicant for employment by the Diocese may be required to undergo pre-employment drug/substance and alcohol testing as deemed appropriate by the Diocese. Such drug/substance and alcohol testing shall be at Diocesan expense and shall be administered by such physicians and/or laboratories as shall be selected by the Diocese.

If an applicant for employment fails to test Negative with respect to any pre-employment drug/substance and alcohol test, he or she will not be employed by the Diocese.
**Post Employment Drug/Substance and Alcohol Testing:**
In implementation of the Drug/Substance and Alcohol Abuse Policy of the Diocese, each employee of the Diocese may be required to undergo drug/substance and alcohol testing at any time by the direction of the Bishop of Brownsville. Such drug/substance and alcohol testing shall be at Diocesan expense and shall be administered by such physicians and/or laboratories as shall be selected by the Diocese. Refusal to take the test can be grounds for dismissal.

**Consequences of Violation of Drug/Substance and Alcohol Abuse Policy:**
Consumption of alcoholic beverages on Diocesan premises or during working hours is expressly prohibited, except at business or social functions sponsored by the Diocese. Use, possession, or sale of illegal (non-prescription) drugs/substance under any circumstances is expressly prohibited on Diocesan time and premises. Use of illegal drugs/substance and/or alcohol in public situations, which could cause loss of credibility to the employee or to the Diocese, **could result in severe disciplinary action up to and including termination.** An employee of the Diocese who reports to work under the influence of drugs/substance and/or alcohol (as defined herein) or who uses or is under the influence of or possesses or sells or distributes drugs/substances (as defined herein) during work hours or while on Diocesan premises or while in a Diocesan vehicle or while otherwise on the job or who fails to test negative with respect to any post employment drug/substance and alcohol test shall be considered to be guilty of misconduct warranting discharge from the employ of the Diocese and **may be discharged from the employ of the Diocese.**

**Accident Related Drug/Substance and Alcohol Testing:**
When a work related accident occurs it is imperative that the incident is reported promptly to Human Resources. An accident report shall then be turned over to the Human Resources Director for determination of testing for drugs/substance and alcohol use. Such testing shall be at Diocesan expense and shall be administered by such physicians and/or laboratories as shall be selected by the Diocese.

**Affirmation to Employees of Drug/Substance and Alcohol Abuse Policy:**
To insure that each employee of the Diocese is aware of the Drug/Substance and Alcohol Abuse Policy of the Diocese, a copy of the Drug/Substance and Alcohol Policy Affirmation will be provided to (and receipted for by) each current employee of the Diocese. A copy of this Drug/Substance and Alcohol Abuse Policy will also be provided to (and receipted for by) each future new employee of the Diocese on or before the first day of his or her employment.
703 Sexual and other Unlawful Harassment

The Diocese of Brownsville is committed to providing a work environment that is free of discrimination and unlawful harassment. Actions, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual’s sex, race, ethnicity, age, religion, or any other legally protected characteristic will not be tolerated. As an example, sexual harassment (both overt and subtle) is a form of employee misconduct that is demeaning to another person, undermines the integrity of the employment relationship, and is strictly prohibited.

For the purpose of this policy, sexual harassment is defined as any unwelcome sexual advances, requests or sexual favors or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

There are two types of sexual harassment: “quid pro quo” and hostile work environment. “Quid pro quo” involves situations where an employee is forced to choose between submission to sexual demands or the loss of a job, promotions or benefits. Hostile work environment involves situations where an employee is subject to demeaning or offensive language by his or her supervisor or colleagues.

Any employee who wants to report an incident of sexual or other unlawful harassment should promptly report the matter to his or her supervisor. If the supervisor is unavailable or the employee believes it would be inappropriate to contact that person, the employee should immediately contact the Human Resources Director or any other member of management. Employees can raise concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal.

Any supervisor or manager who becomes aware of possible sexual or other unlawful harassment should promptly advise the Human Resources Director or any member of management who will handle the matter in a timely and confidential manner.

Anyone engaging in sexual or other unlawful harassment will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

See Appendix 1 (Policies for Ethical and Responsible Conduct in Ministry)
705 Personal Appearance

Dress, grooming, and personal cleanliness standards contribute to the morale of all employees and affect the image the Diocese of Brownsville presents to visitors.

During working hours, employees are expected to present a clean and neat appearance and to dress professionally. Male employees, with the exception of the maintenance workers, are required to wear shirt and tie to work. Ladies can wear any professional office attire. If skirts are worn, the acceptable length of the skirt is knee-length or longer. Short or tight-fitting garments, jeans, and excessive jewelry are examples of inappropriate attire.

Employees who appear for work inappropriately dressed will be sent home and directed to return to work in proper attire. Under such circumstances, employees will not be compensated for the time away from work.

Consult your supervisor or department head if you have questions as to what constitutes appropriate attire.
706 Return of Property

Employees are responsible for items issued to them by the Diocese of Brownsville or in their possession or control, such as the following:

- credit cards
- keys
- manuals
- cellular phones

All property belonging to the DOB must be returned by employees on or before their last day of work. Where permitted by applicable laws, the DOB may withhold from the employee’s check or final paycheck the cost of any items that are not returned when required. The DOB may also take all action deemed appropriate to recover or protect its property.
708 Resignation

Resignation is a voluntary act initiated by the employee to terminate employment with the Diocese of Brownsville. Although advance notice is not required, the DOB requests at least two weeks written notice of resignation from non-exempt employees and four weeks notice from exempt employees.

Prior to an employee’s departure, an exit interview will be scheduled to discuss the reasons for resignation and the effect of the resignation on benefits.
Appendix E. Formal Warning Document

Church personnel name: ______________________  Position: ______________________

Purpose:

_____ Formal Warning

_____ Probation

Statement of the problem: (violation of policy(ies), standards, poor performance)

Prior discussions or cautions of the problem: (oral or written dates)

Statement of Diocesan policy on the subject:

Summary of corrective action to be taken by Church personnel:

Consequences of failure to complete and maintain corrective action:

Signature of Supervisor: ______________________  Date: ______________________

Signature of Church Personnel: ______________________  Date: ______________________