

Diocese of St. Petersburg Guidance Program Guidelines

Introduction

According to the Florida Catholic Conference, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the National Association for the Education of the Young Child, and the standards of the of the American School Counselors' Association, the school guidance counseling program is based on the developmental needs of all students. School guidance counselors are available to address intellectual, social, physical, and emotional issues.

The guidance counselor working in a school or center in the Diocese of St. Petersburg assumes a foundation based on the teachings of the Catholic Church. The counselor, delegated with a substantive calling, also supports the academic, emotional, and spiritual growth of the student. The fundamental goals of the guidance program are:

- Assist students with academic self-management skills for lifelong learning
- Assist students to develop career and educational awareness
- Assist students to develop career planning skills
- Assist each student to develop self-knowledge and self-acceptance
- Assist students to develop self-management and responsible behavior
- Assist students in developing problem-solving and decision-making skills
- Assist students to develop increased interpersonal and communication skills
- Assist students to respect and value human diversity
- Encourage students to participate in community involvement

School guidance counseling is a short-term process. It requires voluntary participation and demands a level of confidentiality. A referral to guidance for counseling may be initiated by the student, the parent, teachers, administrators, or other appropriate school personnel.

The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops has identified seven tenets of Catholic Social Teaching which permeate our Catholic schools and their mission and beliefs. These tenets provide a foundation for living, sharing, and modeling lives of holiness, compassion, and generosity in a world that exhibits and perpetuates selfishness, materialism, and immorality. Catholic Social Teaching proposes a guideline for a developmentally appropriate program that espouses these tenets. In addition, school guidance counselors are required to provide a higher standard in articulating the teachings of Jesus Christ and offering consolation, support, and dignity to our students and school communities.

The Seven Tenets of Catholic Social Teaching - Foundational for the Guidance Program

1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Catholic Church categorically identifies human life as sacred and defines as foundational the dignity of the human being in a moral society.

Guidance programs serve to develop, enhance, and heal, as appropriate, the self-esteem of the child.

2. Call to Family, Community, and Participation

Individuals are not only sacred but social beings as well. As our society develops laws, politics, and economics, these directly affect our ability to grow and prosper in communal living. All individuals have a right and responsibility to live in and support a society that sustains and cares for those who are poor and vulnerable. The Church recognizes the family as the center of society and fosters its support rather than its disintegration.

3. Rights and Responsibilities

Our Catholic tradition requires that each person have the responsibility to protect the human dignity and the human right. This mandate encompasses the security of the right to life and a right to human decency. This includes mutual respect and responsibility to each other, to families and to society at large.

Guidance programs serve to assist the administration and staff in developing a safe environment and by providing those programs which ensure that bullying, abuse, and threat to harm are avoided.

4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Care of the poor and vulnerable is a measurement of society's moral strength. The guidance program must promote the enhancement of social and personal responsibility. The Church reminds us of the story of the Last Judgment (Matthew 25:1-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

Guidance programs support activities which provide students with an understanding of and an opportunity for service to the greater community, and especially for those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged. The guidance counselor supports the greater Diocesan school community by providing support and needed intervention in situations of crisis.

5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The premise of a strong society is the requirement of the economy to serve people. The right to productive work must be protected as a way for the individual to contribute to Our Lord's creation. The dignity of work must be protected as it, in turn, protects the right of the worker. This includes the right to a fair wage, private property, and enterprise.

Guidance counselors assist students in their understanding of and success in their "work" - that of being engaged and responsible students.

6. Solidarity

The Church teaches that we are one family - no matter the racial, ethnic, economic, and philosophical differences. "Loving our neighbor" has implications of global proportions.

Guidance programs support those activities that provide students with an understanding of empathy and diversity, and an opportunity for service to the greater community - especially for those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged.

7. Care for God's Creation

Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan. It is a requirement of our faith. We have a far-reaching moral and ethical responsibility to protect people, the environment, and all living things.

Guidance programs support a curriculum that incorporates environmental awareness, responsibility, and action.

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