

Deacon Personnel Policy Manual

Diocese of Erie

INTRODUCTION

The *Deacon Personnel Policy Manual* is designed to assist the members of the deacon community (and those who interact with deacons) in becoming familiar with the policies and procedures of our Diocese relating to the diaconate. It presumes the universal law of the Church as found in the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* and the special norms that govern the permanent diaconate as found in the 1998 *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons* issued by the Congregation for Catholic Education, the 1998 *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons* issued by the Congregation for the Clergy, and the 2021 *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States* issued by the USCCB.

What is contained in this *Deacon Personnel Policy Manual* is normative and is to be observed by all regarding whatever pertains to the permanent diaconate in the Diocese of Erie. Only the Diocesan Bishop or his delegate may dispense from these norms in those cases permitted by law.

ARTICLE ONE: OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT DIACONATE

1. The Office of the Permanent Diaconate is hereby established and given responsibility for:
 - a. The integral formation of candidates for ordination to the Permanent Diaconate,
 - b. Continuing formation and support for the life and ministry of permanent deacons in the Diocese of Erie.
 - c. Promoting the development, appreciation of and fruitful ministry of permanent deacons in the Diocese of Erie.
 - d. Collaboration with the Clergy Personnel Office in the ministerial appointment of permanent deacons by the Bishop.
2. The Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate is appointed by the Diocesan Bishop and responsible for fulfilling the responsibilities and mission described above. The Director may be assisted by an Associate Director, also appointed by the Diocesan Bishop, who collaborates and shares with the Director responsibility for the mission of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate.¹

ARTICLE TWO: FACULTIES

1. A deacon's faculties are authorized and delegated at the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop, in accordance with the duties of deacon as described in the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* and the liturgical

¹ All references to the program Director in this *Deacon Personnel Policy Manual* include the Associate Director, unless specifically stated otherwise. Actual performance of duties between them is assigned at their discretion.

books. Faculties granted are to be exercised with and under the direction of the pastor of the parish. The Chancery office may be contacted should the deacon have a question or if he should need a copy of his faculties.

ARTICLE THREE: APPOINTMENTS

1. Diaconal appointments are made by the Diocesan Bishop.² No deacon is permitted to create, initiate, and/or engage in any formal public ministry representing the church or its institutions unless approved or appointed by the Diocesan Bishop.³ Diaconal appointments are based on the personal qualifications and abilities of the deacon and the pastoral needs of the diocese. All appointments will take into consideration the needs of the deacon's family and occupational responsibilities. Proximity to the deacon's home will also be considered.
2. Appointments are communicated by a letter signed by the Diocesan Bishop. The term of the appointment is specified in the Diocesan Bishop's letter. Unforeseen circumstances, given the changing needs of the diocese, may necessitate an earlier change.
3. Appointments will normally involve a consultative process. There will be consultation with the deacon prior to finalizing his appointment, as well as with the appropriate pastor in the case of parish assignments. However, the Diocesan Bishop reserves the right to make direct appointments.
4. Only the Diocesan Bishop terminates a diaconal appointment. No deacon is permitted to leave, resign, or change his assignment without the prior written permission of the Diocesan Bishop. Unless otherwise indicated, a deacon retains his assignment with the appointment of a new pastor or supervisor.
5. Normally a deacon is given a parish appointment and/ or a diocesan ministry appointment. The nature of each appointment will be specified in the letter of appointment with specific details to be worked out between the deacon and his pastor or supervisor using the *Diaconal Ministry Profile*.
6. Whenever there is a serious difficulty in the exercise of ministry by a deacon in his assignment in a Catholic institution (e.g., parish, Catholic school, Catholic Charities affiliated agency, etc.), the pastor or supervisor should immediately notify the Director or Associate Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate, Vicar for Clergy, or the Diocesan Bishop before taking any disciplinary action. On his part, the deacon should not hesitate to consult with the Director or Associate Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate, Vicar for Clergy, or the Diocesan Bishop so that difficulties in an assignment may be addressed.
7. Whenever there is a serious difficulty in the exercise of ministry by a deacon in his assignment in public or private institutions or agencies not affiliated with the Church (e.g., nursing homes,

² National Directory, n. 44.

³ National Directory, n. 46. As an ordained minister the deacon represents the Church and, in some respects, acts as an agent of the Church. The ministry of the deacon is not just his personal act of diakonia but the ministry of the Church to those whom he serves. As such, the bishop must be aware of and approve of his particular ministry in the name of the Church.

hospitals, prisons, etc.), the deacon is to promptly notify the Director or Associate Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate, especially if the deacon has been warned or has received notice that disciplinary action may result or has already been taken. The supervisor within the institution or agency should likewise notify the Director or Associate Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate of any serious difficulties that arise in regard to the ministry of the deacon, especially if the difficulties may result in some disciplinary action or if the difficulties may cause the directors to suspend or threaten to disallow that ministry within a public or private institution not affiliated with the Church.

8. A deacon wishing a change of assignment, whatever the reason, should contact the Director or Associate Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate and discuss his need. He may also approach the Diocesan Bishop personally. The request for change may be referred to the Clergy Personnel Board or kept strictly confidential depending on circumstances.

ARTICLE FOUR: CONDUCT IN VARIOUS AFFAIRS

1. Deacons are obliged to observe the norms concerning the basic rights and obligations for clergy as set forth in *The Code of Canon Law*, with due regard for the norms that apply especially to deacons in *The Code of Canon Law*, the *National Directory*, and the diocesan *Deacon Personnel Policy Manual*.
2. In all forms of address for permanent deacons, the appropriate title is "Deacon."⁴
3. Permanent Deacons are to dress in a manner appropriate to their office when serving the people of God. This service to the people includes attendance and/or participation in meetings, seminars, etc. in which a deacon is perceived as being a representative of his parish, Catholic organization, or the Catholic community at large. This includes any meetings at Saint Mark Catholic Center or any other Catholic institution.
 - Permanent Deacon attire should be appropriate for the occasion, show respect to the community the deacon is serving, be clean and pressed.
 - Consideration should be taken to include the use of the deacon cross or badge or attire with the deacon cross to assist those who do not know the deacon in identifying him as a deacon.
 - In all cases, the deacon attire should respectfully represent the Permanent Deacon community. Consequently, shorts, non-collared shirts, gym attire, and the like are generally not appropriate attire.
 - Permanent deacons do not wear the Roman collar, nor do they wear any distinctive clerical garb outside of liturgical functions in the Erie Diocese.
4. A permanent deacon may not present his name for election to any public office in a primary election or in any other general election, or accept a nomination or appointment to public office, without the prior written permission of the Diocesan Bishop.⁵

⁴ *Congregation for Catholic Education and Congregation for the Clergy, Joint Study of the U.S. Draft Document – National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United*

⁵ *National Directory*, n. 96 canon 288

5. A permanent deacon may not actively and publicly participate in political parties or in another person's political campaign without the prior permission of the Diocesan Bishop.⁶
6. A permanent deacon may not have an active part in governing labor unions without the prior written permission of the Diocesan Bishop.⁷
7. A permanent deacon must have written permission from the Diocesan Bishop for matters relating to Power of Attorney or serving on a board if they occur outside the scope of his secular employment or his personal affairs and the affairs of the immediate family.

ARTICLE FIVE: INCARDINATION/EXCARDINATION

1. "A person becomes a cleric in the church through the reception of the diaconate and is incardinated into the particular church . . . for whose service he has been advanced."⁸
2. A deacon incardinated in the Diocese of Erie and moving permanently to another diocese for reasons for employment or family should contact the Director or Associate Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate in Erie for assistance with the process of excardination.
3. A deacon coming to the Diocese of Erie from another diocese and wishing to incardinate must first consult with Director of the program in his diocese for assistance with the process. All clerics coming with the intention of incardinating will be placed on a three-year probationary period as determined by the Diocesan Bishop.
4. Temporary transfer to another diocese without the intention of incardination requires the written approval of the Bishop of the Diocese of Erie.
5. A deacon coming from another diocese who wishes to exercise diaconal ministry in the Diocese of Erie must provide written proof that he is in good standing by the Diocesan Bishop of his diocese. This is required for the exercise of any public ministry.⁹ Temporary transfer from another diocese and exercise of diaconal ministry in the Diocese of Erie requires the explicit approval of the Bishop of Erie and may require the granting of diocesan faculties for the duration of the deacon's stay in the Diocese of Erie.

⁶ *National Directory*, n. 96 canon 288

⁷ *Canons* 287 §2; 288

⁸ *Canon* 266 §1

⁹ *This includes even a one-time celebration of baptism, wedding, funeral or any other liturgical service or spiritual exercise; preaching at a liturgical celebration or some other spiritual exercise (e.g., a retreat or 40 Hours); or teaching or lecturing.*

ARTICLE SIX: LEAVE OF ABSENCE

1. A leave of absence may be requested when personal, family, or health circumstances make it difficult or impossible for a deacon to continue his ministry without serious disruption.
2. A leave of absence is granted by the Diocesan Bishop and temporarily releases a deacon from his ministerial assignments.¹⁰
3. The request for a leave should be made in writing to the Diocesan Bishop specifying the reasons for and the proposed duration of the leave. Health professionals or other counselors may be consulted for relevant information and advice as necessary. If the leave is granted, it will be given for a specific period determined by the Diocesan Bishop.
4. It may be necessary at times for the Diocesan Bishop to intervene personally or through the Director or Associate Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate to address personal problems relating to physical or emotional health issues as well as marital or family issues. Such intervention may be necessary when deteriorating health or other circumstances interfere with a deacon's performance of his ministry.
5. While on a leave of absence, the Bishop may consider it necessary or appropriate to restrict the public ministry of a deacon. Any restrictions, if applicable, will be included in a letter from the Bishop or his delegate.

ARTICLE SEVEN: MARITAL SEPARATION/DIVORCE

1. When marital difficulties begin to disrupt family, occupational or ministry responsibilities, the deacon and spouse are urged to enter counseling. The Diocese of Erie will provide counseling up to a maximum of six (6) one-hour sessions at no cost to a deacon and his spouse who are experiencing marital difficulties. In order to take advantage of this counseling opportunity, the deacon and/or his spouse must make a confidential request to the Director or Associate Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate.¹¹ Information and records are confidential in accord with applicable law.
2. In the case where couples have entered counseling and have decided to separate, the deacon is to petition for a leave of absence allowing the couple appropriate time and attention to work at healing and reconciliation.

¹⁰ The presumption is that at the end of the leave of absence period the deacon will return to the appointed ministries from which he was given a leave of absence. However, for the pastoral benefit of the community served, the needs of the diocese or the well-being of the deacon or his family, it may be necessary to appoint the deacon to different parish or diocesan ministries.

¹¹ In the interest of safeguarding confidentiality and privacy, a deacon and his spouse may utilize this counseling benefit at any of the offices of Catholic Charities Counseling and Adoption Services located throughout the Diocese of Erie. Arrangements can also be made with other certified counselors if requested by the deacon or his spouse and the use of Catholic Charities services is deemed inappropriate by the Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate under the circumstances.

3. In the matter of divorce, a leave of absence of six (6) months duration will be granted by the Diocesan Bishop allowing time for the couple and family to work through the various stages of grieving and adjustment occasioned by the divorce. A determination of the deacon's ministerial status will be made during the leave.
4. In the event that the deacon is determined responsible for the divorce for reasons of marital infidelity, spousal or child abuse or other serious reasons or scandal, a canonical investigation may be initiated, and appropriate canonical action invoked.¹²

ARTICLE EIGHT: RETIREMENT

1. Six months prior to his 75th birthday a deacon is required to submit a letter requesting retirement from ministry to the Diocesan Bishop who, after considering all the circumstances, decides whether to accept or defer the retirement. If accepted, the resignation is effective as of the deacon's 75th birthday unless otherwise specified. A copy of the letter will be forwarded to the Vicar of Clergy and the Director of Deacons.
2. Deacons may resign from the active ministry voluntarily at the age of 70 with the consent of the Diocesan Bishop. Additionally, any deacon who has not attained the age of 70 years but whose ability to continue in active ministry is impaired because of health or other serious reasons may retire with the consent of the Diocesan Bishop. In both cases, the deacon should submit his request in writing to the Diocesan Bishop.
3. Unless otherwise specified, the deacon who retires early or at age 75 retains his diocesan faculties. If he wishes to continue occasional public ministry as a retired deacon, he will need to maintain all clearances and training required by the diocesan *Policy for the Protection of Children* and follow any diocesan policies related to ministry. He is fully entitled to take part in clergy study days and other continuing education activities at no charge. Expenses for an annual retreat and participation in Emmaus or similar Diocesan clergy convocations will be covered by the Diocese.
4. The deacon has no official appointment once retired nor will the parish be required to provide a parish stipend.

ARTICLE NINE: DEATH OF A DEACON

1. Upon the death of a deacon, his family or family representative or pastor should notify the Director or Associate Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate or, in their absence, the Chancery Office, who will then notify the Diocesan Bishop. After funeral arrangements, time and location of the Wake and Funeral Rite have been established, the entire diaconal community and the priests of the Diocese will be notified.

¹² This would be in cases where a delict appears to have been committed, such as a violation of canons 1395 through 1398.

2. The deacon's family, the deacon assigned to the parish and the local pastor should work in concert with the diocesan Office for Divine Worship and the Bishop's Master of Ceremonies in planning the funeral liturgy. The wishes of the deacon's family should be in concert with the liturgical norms and directives of the Church.
3. The Vigil Service may take place at the parish of assignment on the evening prior to the funeral liturgy and, if possible, the deceased deacon may remain in state at the parish church. The Vigil Service should be scheduled at a time when other deacons, along with family, friends, and parishioners, can attend.
4. The deceased deacon should be attired in his diaconal vesture; alb, stole and dalmatic.
5. The Diocesan Bishop is expected to celebrate the funeral Mass. In his absence, a designee of the Diocesan Bishop will preside.
6. Spouses of deceased deacons remain an integral part of the Deacon Community and are encouraged to attend days of recollection, retreats, study days and other spiritual and educational opportunities as they arise.
7. The funeral of a deacon's spouse will be attended by the Diocesan Bishop or his designee.

ARTICLE TEN: POST-ORDINATION PATH IN DIACONAL FORMATION

1. **RETREATS:** Deacons are obligated to make a yearly retreat of at least three full days. Private retreats are permitted on the fulfillment of certain conditions. First, they must be made in a monastery or recognized retreat facility. Secondly, notification of attendance must be sent from the retreat facility to the Director of the Permanent Deacon Program upon completion of the retreat. Lastly, private retreats can be made every other year. In alternate years, the deacon must attend one of the regularly scheduled diocesan deacon retreats. Nothing substitutes for the annual retreat – not the *Cursillo*, Marriage Encounter, the Emmaus Convocation, or other similar gatherings.
2. **STUDY DAYS AND DAYS OF RECOLLECTION** are important; therefore, attendance is considered a priority. Such events usually are planned and scheduled at times when most of the diaconal community is free to attend. Deacon spouses and Deacon widows are welcomed and strongly encouraged to attend.
3. **CONTINUING EDUCATION** as outlined in Appendix A.
4. **MENTORING PROGRAM FOR THE NEWLY ORDAINED** is included to ensure their diaconal ministry begins in a positive and supportive manner as outlined in Appendix B.

**ARTICLE ELEVEN:
BENEFITS AND REMUNERATION**

1. Permanent deacons in full-time employment by the diocese, parish, diocesan institution, or agency are to receive remuneration commensurate with the salaries and benefits provided to the lay men and women on staff for that institution and occupation.
2. Permanent deacons in full-time secular employment, as well as those in part-time ministries, are to be reimbursed for legitimate expenses incurred in their ministry. Among the benefits and legitimate expenses for which the deacon is to be reimbursed are the following:
 - a) Annual Retreat
 - b) Continuing Education
 - c) Annual stipend payable by the proper parish, institution, or agency.
 - d) Emmaus Convocation
 - e) Ministry-related mileage at the current diocesan rate payable from the parish

The Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate in consultation with the Diocesan Finance Office is responsible for setting and communicating the level of benefits and annual allowances for reimbursements. The deacon should consult with his pastor/supervisor prior to incurring any expenses to determine if it falls within diocesan policy. The Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate can be contacted for clarification.

**ARTICLE TWELVE:
PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

1. The Diocese of Erie has addressed the issue of child abuse by way of its *Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth*. Concurrent with the diocesan policy is a policy particular to sexual misconduct on the part of priests and deacons. A copy of this current policy may be reviewed at: <https://www.eriescd.org/childprotection/policies-1.html> or https://www.eriescd.org/images/sections/childprotection/pdf/bypriests_2013b.pdf
2. In the matter of allegations of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or deacon, the Diocese will comply fully with all applicable civil laws and cooperate in the investigation in accord with the law of the jurisdiction in question. Sexual abuse of a minor by a cleric is a crime in all civil jurisdictions and in church law. (CIC, c. 1395, 2)

**ARTICLE THIRTEEN:
OFFENSES AND PENALTIES**

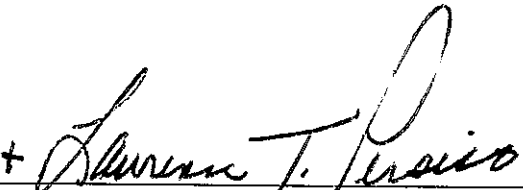
1. Any process leading to the declaration or imposition of ecclesiastical sanctions for a delict committed under church law are determined by the canons of Book VI of *The Code of Canon Law*.

**ARTICLE FOURTEEN:
ADMENDMENTS**

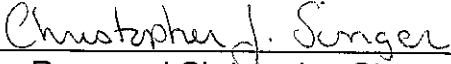
1. Proposed amendments to the *Deacon Personnel Policy Manual* are to be reviewed by the Deacon Council and their recommendations provided to the Diocesan Bishop for his consideration.

This Deacon Personnel Policy Manual, including its attachments, is hereby promulgated as Diocesan policy effective November 3, 2023, all things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery in Erie, Pennsylvania the 3rd day of November A.D. 2023.



The Most Reverend Lawrence T. Persico, JCL
Bishop of Erie



The Reverend Christopher Singer, JCL
Chancellor

Appendix A

Continuing Education of Deacons

Introduction

As professionals in ministry, deacons must constantly form themselves through theological, spiritual, and pastoral continuing education to insure a sense of self-confidence and adequacy in their ministry. They also need to demonstrate to the Church they serve that they are competent spiritual leaders and maintain a connection to their community of fellow ministers.

Accordingly, and in compliance with Paragraph 267, *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*, August 2021. "Each diocesan Church is to establish a basic minimum of continuing education hours to be fulfilled on an annual basis by all diocesan deacons in active service. This would be in addition to time allocated for the annual diaconal community retreat."

All deacons given faculties to minister within the Diocese of Erie should complete a minimum of 14 contact hours of continuing education every year. At least 2 hours shall be devoted to the study of Homiletics each year. A contact hour is the actual time spent on the continuing education topic, and does not include travel time, lunch, dinner, break times or other times not directly associated with the continuing education topic. These hours are to be divided between private and communal forms of education. Attendance at diocesan retreats does not satisfy the continuing education requirements for permanent deacons.

General Criteria

The following criteria have been established to assist each deacon in determining the number and type of contact hours achieved through various kinds of continuing education.

A.) The scope and nature of instruction should pertain to diaconal ministry and to the church in the areas of service, word, and sacrament. This would include background for updating of current ministry or preparing for future ministry.

B.) Credit may be recorded in whole or part using the following guidelines:

1. *Certification courses*: Many national, regional or diocesan courses issue a certificate at the end of an instructional seminar or conference. All credit hours shown on the certificates should be converted to contact hours as defined earlier in this document.
2. *Announced credit courses*: Any course or conference offered by the Deacon /Clergy Continuing Education and Formation Committee of the Diocese of Erie

3. *College courses:* Due to the wide variety of methods used in college credit systems, it is not possible to convert college credits to contact hours. Instead, count one contact hour for each classroom hour attended. Such courses must be related to diaconal ministry.
4. *Private study:* Utilization of on-line programs via the Internet (Podcasts, downloads, online educational sessions, as well as books, DVDs, and CDs related to diaconal ministry is encouraged. One contact hour is allotted for each hour of listening/participation.
5. *Other:* Courses, conferences, seminars, workshops, intensive weekends, study groups related to upgrade of ministerial skills are acceptable.
6. *Retreats:* Attendance at retreats over and above the diocesan requirement (as stated previously) is encouraged as part of continuing development. Participating in a weekend retreat or at the annual Diocesan Emmaus Convocation can be credited, with contact hours determined by the time spent in the actual number of scheduled sessions attended.

C.) The following activities are not normally considered contact hours:

1. Travel related to meetings of place of instruction
2. Informal meetings and prayers
3. Prayer services and liturgies
4. Spiritual direction sessions
5. Pastoral council, diocesan board, administration, business, or committee meetings
6. Deanery meetings
7. Support group functions
8. Courses not related to ministerial service

D.) Deacons are expected to submit a report of all their continuing education activities annually by June 1st, to the Office of the Permanent Diaconate to keep their personnel file current. A standard reporting form is available on the website and included here for illustrative purposes.

Funding Assistance

As part of the diocesan commitment to the continuing education and formation of permanent deacons, funds may be made available to assist those deacons who wish to engage in approved theological, pastoral or ministry related programs of formal study toward academic degrees or for ministry related professional certification or licensing.

The following restrictions apply:

1. Funding is not automatic and must be applied for annually by the deacon requesting the funding assistance. A standard application form is attached for illustrative purposes. The

application should be submitted at least three months in advance of the beginning of the program for which funds are requested.

2. The deacon must demonstrate his ability to effectively complete the program and that the program for which funding is requested will have a direct and positive effect on the ability of the deacon to better carry out his ministry in the diocese, either the ministry to which he is assigned or toward which he has been told by authorized personnel (*Bishop, Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate*) he is moving.
3. The program for which funding assistance is requested must respond to genuine diocesan needs articulated by the Diocesan Bishop.
4. The program should not interfere with the normal and effective carrying out of the individual deacon's primary pastoral assignment.
5. Funds for this purpose are limited to those made available through the diocesan budget, as well as various endowments, grants and scholarships administered by the Diocese for this purpose.
6. The awarding of funding assistance is at the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop, upon the recommendation of the Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate and the Vicar of Clergy Personnel.

Criteria for Dispersal of Funds for Continued Study

In order to bring more clarity to the process by which a decision to fund or not to fund a degree or certification or licensing program of any individual deacon is made, these criteria have been established:

1. The individual deacon must submit a completed application to the Director of the Permanent Diaconate at least three months before the program is to begin.
2. The applicant must give evidence that the program has a direct, positive effect on the manner in which the individual deacon is better able to carry out his ministry in the diocese and, more specifically, in the particular ministry to which he has been assigned or toward which he has been told he is moving.
3. The program must respond in a very direct way to the genuine diocesan needs that have been articulated by the Diocesan Bishop in consultation with the Presbyteral Council.
4. The program may not in any way interfere with the normal and effective carrying out of the individual deacon's assignment. A leave from the assignment may be considered

Appendix B

MENTORING NEWLY ORDAINED DEACONS

A program for newly ordained deacons during the first five years of their ministry is to be coordinated and supervised by the Director of the Permanent Diaconate.¹³ Under the diocesan bishop's authority, periodic meetings should be arranged between priests, deacons, religious, and laity involved in pastoral work "to avoid compartmentalization or the development of isolated groups and to guarantee coordinated unity for different pastoral activities in the diocese."¹⁴ The ongoing formation continues throughout the deacon's earthly life.¹⁵

¹³ *National Directory*, n. 48

¹⁴ *National Directory*, n. 48 Canons 285 §3; 288

¹⁵ *National Directory*, n. 48