



Seminarian Misconduct and Issues Related to Sexuality

This document is provided to answer questions about how the Archdiocese of Denver handles misconduct and/or abuse of power in the seminary. It is not meant to present the topics exhaustively nor serve as a form of policy; rather, it is a starting point to answer questions that are being asked.

How does the seminary ensure that the Archdiocese of Denver Code of Conduct is being followed?

The code of conduct deals with many behaviors that require mandated reporting under Colorado law. All new faculty, staff, and seminarians receive Safe Environment training at the beginning of the year, which includes instruction of when and how to make mandated reports. During the course of seminary formation, a seminarian is evaluated on his fitness to become a priest, which includes input from faculty, formator priests, and other seminarians. Behavior inconsistent with the code of conduct is noted and addressed (which may include dismissal) before a man is recommended for ordination and, of course, any serious violation means the individual is not ordained.

How does the seminary address serious issues related to sexuality with applicants?

All applicants engage in a rigorous intake process through a battery of screening requirements including criminal background check, health examination, and a thorough psychological evaluation which assesses their current state of psychosexual development and capacity to live chastely. If the candidate has deep-seated homosexual tendencies or any other serious issues related to sexuality, he is not admitted.*

How does the seminary address serious issues related to sexuality with seminarians should they come to light during formation?

If it comes to light in seminary formation that a man struggles with deep-seated homosexual tendencies or other serious issues related to sexuality, the man is encouraged to attend counseling to determine his level of psychosexual development and capacity to live a chaste life. If his capacity is found lacking, the man is asked leave seminary in order to work on his issues.

What is the role of the counseling that is made available to seminarians?

Counseling in seminary formation is geared toward helping men grow in all areas of the human person rather than treatment of serious psychopathology (e.g. addictions, personality disorders, arrested psychosexual development), which must be done outside of seminary formation by expert therapists. These therapists and professionals are best suited to advise the seminary on an appropriate course for each person in treatment.

If a superior or professor at the seminary were to use his position of power for his own benefit, to the detriment of a seminarian, such as if by violating boundaries of a sexual nature, what means does a seminarian have for reporting the incident?

In the case of abuse by any person at the seminary, the seminarian always is encouraged to report anything he believes might be a crime to law enforcement. He is also encouraged to report the incident to a higher level of authority in the seminary/archdiocese. If this does not correct the issue or if this is not an option the seminarian feels comfortable with, the seminarian can make a report to his diocesan Vocation Director, his diocesan Vicar for Clergy, the Victim Assistance Coordinator for the Archdiocese of Denver, or an official from a neighboring diocese. There are many reporting mechanisms inside and outside the archdiocese to assure the seminarian has multiple ways to address any of his concerns.

*In the light of such teaching, this Dicastery, in accord with the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, believes it necessary to state clearly that the Church, while profoundly respecting the persons in question, cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called "gay culture." (Congregation for Catholic Education, Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders, Nov. 4, 2005, n. 2)



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