



## **Safe Environment Guidelines for Conduct with Minors, Endangered Adults or Vulnerable Adults**

### **Rationale**

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis provides practical guidelines for clergy, religious, lay employees (staff), and volunteers, working in and on behalf of its schools or parishes, and other archdiocesan programs or agencies which engage in ministry to minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults. Minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults are dependent on adult staff and volunteers in positions of trust and leadership. It is important that good judgement be exercised by adult staff and volunteers who represent the archdiocese in regard to interactions with minors, endangered adults or vulnerable adults. The following set of guidelines for conduct must be observed by all staff and volunteers of the archdiocese when dealing with minors, or endangered or vulnerable adults. These guidelines are to be employed with appropriate judgment and discretion when interacting with minors, endangered adults or vulnerable adults.

If extraordinary circumstances arise in which you must deviate from these guidelines, you should notify your supervisor as soon as possible. If one-on-one involvement with a minor, endangered adult, or vulnerable adult is unavoidable, inform a parent/ guardian (as applies), emergency contact, or supervisor. You must use great discretion when dealing with this circumstance. Consult your supervisor for direction if your situation is not clarified by these guidelines.

### **Use**

It is recommended these guidelines are provided to all new staff and volunteers and provided annually to existing staff and volunteers.

### **Definition**

A minor is anyone who has not yet reached his or her eighteenth (18<sup>th</sup>) birthday or is 18 but still a high school student.

An endangered adult is incapable by reason of mental illness, intellectual disability, dementia, habitual drunkenness, excessive use of drugs, or other physical or mental incapacity of managing or directing the management of the individual's property or providing or directing the provision of self-care.

A vulnerable adult is a person eighteen years of age or older who is unable or unlikely to report abuse without assistance because of impairment of physical or mental function, emotional status or deprivation of personal freedom, which may be due to an abuse of power, even if the relationship is between adults that in fact, even occasionally, limits their capacity to intend to or to want or in any way resist the offense.

### **Practical Guidelines**

All clergy, religious, lay employees, and volunteers of the archdiocese will observe the following guidelines when interacting with minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults:

1. The archdiocesan Code of Conduct [www.archindy.org/abuse/code.html](http://www.archindy.org/abuse/code.html) describes expected conduct of adult staff and volunteers. This should be communicated and signed by the adult staff at time of employment or volunteer at the local level in advance of the activity and/or overnight trip. It is the expectation that the directives provided in the Code of Conduct will be followed in all interaction with minors, endangered adults and vulnerable adults.
2. Minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults may not stay overnight in a parish rectory in the archdiocese unless they are relatives of the priest in residence.
3. Avoid unnecessary physical contact with a minor, endangered adult, or vulnerable adult, maintaining appropriate boundaries. In situations where physical contact is necessary and proper, such as in sacramental preparation, use sound discretion and moderation. If a minor, endangered adult, or vulnerable adult initiates innocent physical contact out of acceptable affection, an appropriate response (side hug) is proper if not prolonged. Punishment should never be physical in nature.
4. Except in unavoidable circumstances that require otherwise, for example when a person needs assistance, do not be alone with a minor, endangered adult, or vulnerable adult in a residence, school, sleeping facility, locker room, rest room, dressing facility, vehicle, or other closed area. In regard to transportation: one adult staff or volunteer may transport 2 or more youth in a vehicle to the same location or 2 unrelated adult staff or volunteers may transport 1 child. Any change in transportation must be communicated to a parent/ guardian (as applies), emergency contact, or Administrator prior to transport. Unless medically necessary, minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults should ride in the back seat of the vehicle, while adult staff or volunteers ride in the front.
5. Any one-on-one counseling, tutoring, training, or other assistance or service with a minor, endangered adult, or vulnerable adult must be conducted in an open room setting without closed doors, except for a door with a window, and only if readily observable by others who may be in the room or in the hallway outside the room.
6. For events for minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults that require chaperones, chaperones should be adult staff or volunteers, over 18 and no longer in high school, who have completed Safe Environment training and a background check through the Archdiocese of Indianapolis (or a comparable diocesan safe environment program if from another diocese).  
The archdiocesan recommended chaperone to minor ratio is 1:8 for Elementary and Junior High students and 1:8 for High School students, for children ages three and under the ratio is 1:5. The archdiocesan recommended chaperone ratio for endangered adults or vulnerable adults is 1:8, unless greater assistance is warranted based on the needs of those attending an event.
7. All Safe Environment policies and expectations remain in effect for all archdiocesan/ parish represented gatherings and field trips, regardless of location.
8. For gatherings and field trips where both male and female minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults are present, the preference would be to have chaperones of both sexes whenever possible. For minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults meeting in a private home for an archdiocesan/parish represented activity (Small faith groups, Girl Scouts, etc.), there must be appropriate chaperoning by at least 2 adult staff or volunteers who are not related

to each other.

Participating minors should have parent / guardian permission to attend the event.

9. Topics of conversation or vocabulary that would be considered offensive or inappropriate should not be discussed or used in the presence of minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults. All language should be in accordance with Catholic teaching and dignity.
10. Regarding social media use with minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults, adult staff and volunteers should be advised of the Social Media Guidelines promulgated by the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Schools which offers helpful tips to maintain safe boundaries with minors.
11. Regarding electronic communications with children and endangered or vulnerable adults, staff and volunteers should be advised that electronic communications are prohibited without copying another employee or a parent/guardian. Exceptions to this may include messages sent via school/parish email or other approved communication platforms.
12. Substances prohibited to minors (alcohol, nicotine products, vape products, pornographic material, illegal or nonprescription drugs) should not be offered or made available.
13. Alcohol may not be used by an adult staff or volunteer when in a chaperone role. Additionally, adult staff or volunteers may not be under the influence of, nor participate in, the use of any illegal or controlled substances when in a chaperone role.
14. Always maintain a professional attitude in dealing with minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults. Avoid emotional attachment and maintain professional boundaries. Be aware of the attraction that minors, endangered adults or vulnerable adults may have for adult staff and volunteers in positions of authority and trust. If you perceive an emotional or physical attraction developing, report the situation to your supervisor and then refer the minor, endangered adult, or vulnerable adult to another qualified adult staff or volunteer, particularly in counseling situations or in situations where a minor is seeking emotional support.
15. If one-on-one counseling, tutoring, training or other care of a minor, endangered adult, or vulnerable adult exceeds a one-time occurrence, parents or guardians (where applicable) should be notified that these appointments are occurring. If a minor, endangered adult or vulnerable adult, threatens harm to self or others, even a one-time occurrence, follow mandatory reporting protocols.
16. **Lodging Standards:**  
The following lodging standards apply to hotel and dormitory room accommodations for adult staff and volunteers and minors, endangered adults or vulnerable adults who participate in overnight events. These standards are consistent with the model proposed by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry . The Archdiocese of Indianapolis endorses this position, also applying these principles to endangered adults or vulnerable adults.

A. Hotel Rooms

A typical hotel room is a room consisting of at least two beds with quad occupancy. No adult staff or volunteer shall room with or occupy the same hotel room with a minor, endangered adult, or vulnerable adult except in the case of a parent/ guardian and the parent's/ guardian's minor only; or in the rare case where a minor, endangered adult, or vulnerable adult may need the presence of an adult for medical reasons; or, in the event that unscheduled and unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of event participants occur which necessitate, at least two adult staff or volunteers may occupy the same hotel room with at least two minors or endangered adults or vulnerable adults. A married couple may share the same hotel room, with or without their children, assuming appropriate facilities are available, but no other mixed sex hotel room arrangements are allowed. Adult staff or volunteer participants should room in proximity to the rooms occupied by minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults, either by staggering rooms across from or next to those rooms occupied by minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults.

Adult staff or volunteers may, in pairs, conduct brief bed checks of hotel rooms occupied by minors, endangered adults or vulnerable adults, only at pre-determined times. If another adult staff or volunteer is not available for bed checks to be completed in pairs, the unaccompanied adult staff or volunteer should complete such checks without entering the room.

B. Dormitory-Type Accommodations

Adult staff and volunteers and minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults, of the same sex may occupy dormitory room type accommodations provided there is a minimum of two adult staff or volunteers and four minors per room and no separate accommodations are available for the adult staff and volunteers. Adult staff and volunteers must establish separation barriers or privacy zones in the dormitory room which shall include a temporary blanket or sheet wall when possible, in order to keep their sleeping and dressing area separate from the area for minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults. No mixed sex dormitory room arrangements are allowed. In large sleeping areas such as gymnasiums, establish privacy barriers as previously described.

C. Respect of Privacy

Adult staff and volunteer participants must respect the privacy of minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults in situations such as changing clothes, taking showers, etc. Adult staff and volunteers must protect their own privacy in similar situations. Other than for pre-determined bed checks and the limited time necessary to assist minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults in settling into or vacating from their rooms, an adult staff or volunteer should not enter a minor, endangered adult, or vulnerable adult room or designated area except to the extent that health or safety concerns require. Moreover, before an overnight trip occurs, all minors, endangered adults, vulnerable adults, adult staff, and volunteers should be made aware of any consequences for non-compliance with the determined lodging standards. Such consequences shall include a requirement that individuals who violate the lodging standards may be required to return home early, if practical, and if necessary, be denied the opportunity to participate in future overnight events.

17. All have an obligation to take appropriate steps to protect minors, endangered adults, or vulnerable adults, particularly when they are in the care of the Church. If you observe another adult violating these guidelines or engaging in other conduct which causes you to have reason for concern for the well-being of a minor, endangered adult, or vulnerable adult, to the extent

possible ensure the safety of the minor, endangered adult, or vulnerable adult and report your concerns to your supervisor immediately. If you have reason to believe that abuse or neglect has occurred or is occurring towards a minor, endangered adult, or vulnerable adult, you must follow both the law\* and archdiocesan policy on reporting incidents of abuse to civil authorities and report the matter to your supervisor immediately or if unavailable submit a report on the Archdiocese of Indianapolis safe environment reporting website, following up with informing your supervisor.

\* Indiana law requires that any individual who has reason to believe that a minor is a victim of abuse or neglect must report immediately to Local Child Protection Services Agency hotline:

1-800- 800-5556.

Suspicion of abuse or neglect of an adult should be reported to Indiana Adult Protective Services hotline: 800-992-6978.

Any suspicion of abuse or neglect should also be reported to the Victim Assistance Coordinator: 800-382-9836, ext. 1548. Confidential reports to the archdiocese can also be made online at

[www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com](http://www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com).

## Glossary

**Archdiocese(an):** The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Indianapolis, including all parishes, schools, agencies, and institutions with direct accountability to the Archbishop of Indianapolis.

**Chaperone:** adult staff or volunteers, who are no longer in high school, who have completed Safe Environment training and a background check through the Archdiocese of Indianapolis (or a comparable diocesan safe environment program if from another diocese) and have been approved by their parish, school, agency and Human Resources.

**Abuse:** Any form of intentional or malicious infliction of injury that damages physical, moral, or mental well-being, including forced or unwanted sexual interaction of any kind. Child abuse includes sexual abuse of, or sexual misconduct with, a child or other individual who is legally incompetent.

**Clergy:** An ordained man; a man in holy orders; a deacon (transitional or permanent), priest, or bishop. Included as 'Staff' for the purposes of this document.

**Endangered Adult:** "An individual who is at least eighteen (18) years of age and incapable by reason of mental illness, intellectual disability, dementia, habitual drunkenness, excessive use of drugs, or other physical or mental incapacity of managing or directing the management of the individual's property or providing or directing the provision of self-care." Indiana Code 12-10-3-2.

**Lay employee:** Lay employees include employees who are not ordained and who are not members of religious communities. Included as 'Staff' for the purposes of this document.

**Minor:** A minor is anyone who has not yet reached his or her eighteenth (18<sup>th</sup>) birthday or is 18 but still a high school student.

**Neglect:** Neglect is the chronic failure to meet the basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education (child), or supervision (child).

**Religious:** a man or woman living a consecrated life in community with others under a rule of life recognized by the Church, i.e., brothers, sisters, nuns, and priests who are members of canonically established religious orders, congregations, or religious institutes. Included as 'Staff' for the purposes of this document.

**Social Media:** Social media is any website or media content that includes and relies on interactivity and content that is created by the users of the site which gives rise to two-way communication and conversation. This differs from traditional media and internet sites which rely on one-way communication and are largely informational. Examples of social media include *YouTube*, *Facebook*, and *Twitter*.

**Staff:** For the purpose of this document, staff includes clergy, religious, and lay employees.

**Victim Assistance Coordinator:** The person appointed by the archbishop to act as his personal representative in the immediate pastoral care of persons who report that they are victims of sexual misconduct by Church personnel. 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1548.

**Volunteer:** For the purpose of this document, volunteer refers to individuals working or ministering on behalf of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis without expectation of compensation, who have completed Safe Environment training, background check and have signed the Code of Conduct.

**Vulnerable Adult:** A person eighteen years of age or older who is unable or unlikely to report abuse without assistance because of impairment of physical or mental function, emotional status or deprivation of personal freedom, which may be due to an abuse of power, even if the relationship is between adults that in fact, even occasionally, limits their capacity to intend to or to want or in any way resist the offense.