

ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

SAFE ENVIRONMENT GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCT WHEN INTERACTING WITH MINORS

RATIONALE

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis provides these guidelines for clergy, religious, and laity who are employees or volunteers working in and on behalf of its schools or parishes, and other archdiocesan programs or agencies which engage in ministry to minors. Minors are dependent on adults, particularly adults in positions of trust and leadership. It is vitally important, therefore, that reasonable prudence be exercised by all adults who perform services on behalf of the archdiocese which involves interaction with minors. The following is a set of practical guidelines for conducting yourself which must be observed by all clergy, religious, lay employees, and volunteers of the archdiocese when dealing with minors. These guidelines are not intended to prevent you from performing your service or ministry but rather to assist you in employing good judgment and appropriate discretion when interacting with minors. If you find it necessary to depart from these guidelines due to some extraordinary circumstance, you should be aware of your departure and must be able to justify your actions and notify your supervisor as soon as possible. If one-on-one involvement with a minor is unavoidable, you must use extreme discretion in your dealings with the minor. Please consult your supervisor for direction if your situation is not clarified by these guidelines.

DEFINITION

A minor is anyone who has not yet reached his or her eighteenth (18th) birthday or is 18 but still a high school student. All clergy, religious, lay employees, and volunteers of the archdiocese will observe the following guidelines when engaging in ministry to or otherwise interacting with minors:

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES

1. Minors may not stay overnight in a parish rectory in the archdiocese unless they are relatives of the priest in residence.
2. Avoid physical contact with a minor. Never engage in any corporal punishment. In situations where physical contact is necessary and proper, such as in sacramental preparation, use sound discretion and moderation. If a minor initiates innocent physical contact out of acceptable affection, an appropriate response (side hug) is proper if not prolonged.
3. Except in unavoidable circumstances that require otherwise, for example a pre-school student who needs assistance in the restroom, do not be alone with a minor in a residence, school, sleeping facility, locker room, rest room, dressing facility, vehicle, or other closed area. For example, one adult may transport 2 or more youth in a vehicle.
4. Any one-on-one counseling, tutoring, training, or other assistance or service with a minor 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.

5. Seek responsible adults who have completed *Safe and Sacred* training and a background check through the Archdiocese of Indianapolis (or a comparable diocesan safe environment program if from another diocese) to be present as chaperones involving events with minors. The archdiocesan recommended chaperone to minor ratio is 1:6 for Elementary and Junior High students and 1:8 for High School students.
6. For gatherings and field trips where both male and female minors are present, the preference would be to have chaperones of both genders whenever possible. For minors 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 adults who are not related to each other. The participating minors should have parental/guardian permission to be at the event.
7. Topics or vocabulary that would not be discussed or used comfortably in the presence of parents should not be discussed or used with minors.
8. In regards to using social media with minors, adults should be advised of the *Social Media Guidelines* promulgated by the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education which offers helpful tips to maintain safe boundaries with minors.
9. Alcohol should not be offered or made available to anyone under the age of 21. Alcohol may not be used by an adult when in a chaperone role.
10. Always maintain a professional posture in dealing with minors. Avoid unwarranted emotional attachment and be aware of the attraction that minors may have for adults in positions of authority and trust. If you perceive emotional or physical attraction developing, report the situation to your supervisor and then refer the minor to another qualified adult, particularly in counseling situations.
11. If one-on-one counseling, tutoring, training or other care of a minor requires frequent or regular appointments, parents should be notified that these appointments are occurring.
12. The following lodging standards apply to hotel and dormitory room accommodations for adults and minors who participate in overnight events. These standards are consistent with the model proposed by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry which discourages the rooming of adults with minors. The Archdiocese of Indianapolis endorses this position.

A. Hotel Rooms

A typical hotel room is a room consisting of at least two beds with quad occupancy. No adult shall room with or occupy the same hotel room with a minor except in the case of a parent and the parent's minor only; in the rare case where a minor 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 adults to occupy the same hotel room with at least two minors. A married couple may share the same hotel room, with or without their children, assuming appropriate facilities are available, but no other mixed gender hotel room

arrangements are allowed. Adult participants should room in proximity to the rooms occupied by minors, either by staggering rooms across from or next to those rooms occupied by minors. Adults may conduct brief bed checks of hotel rooms occupied by minors only at pre-determined times.

B. Dormitory-Type Accommodations

Adults and minors of the same gender may occupy dormitory room type accommodations provided there is a minimum of two adults and four minors per room and no separate accommodations are available for the adults. Adults 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 minor area. No mixed gender dormitory room arrangements are allowed. In large sleeping areas such as gymnasiums, establish gender separation barriers as previously described.

C. Respect of Privacy

Adult participants must respect the privacy of minor participants in situations such as changing clothes, taking showers, etc. Adults must protect their own privacy in similar situations. Other than for pre-determined bed checks and the limited time necessary to assist minors in settling into or vacating from their rooms, an adult participant should not intrude into a minor's room or designated area except to the extent that health or safety concerns require. Moreover, before an overnight trip occurs, all minor and adult participants 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 be denied the opportunity to participate in future overnight events.

D. Code of Conduct

The archdiocesan Code of Conduct www.archindy.org/abuse/code.html describes expected conduct of adults and should be communicated and signed by the adult at the local level in advance of the activity and/or overnight trip.

13. All have an obligation to take appropriate steps to protect minors, 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, ensure the safety of the minor and report your concerns to your supervisor immediately. If you have reason to believe that child abuse or neglect has occurred or is occurring, you must follow the archdiocesan policy* on reporting incidents of child abuse to civil authorities and report the matter to your supervisor immediately or if unavailable submit a report on the Archdiocese of Indianapolis reporting website.

*The 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: 800-800-5556 or the local law enforcement agency. Under Indiana law, it is a criminal act not to make such a report. This law applies to *all adults without exception*. You must also report to the archdiocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator at 800-382-9836 ext. 1548. Confidential reports can be made anonymously to the archdiocese @ www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com.