

Code of Conduct for Church Personnel

As someone who ministers to young people, I will maintain a professional role and be mindful of the trust and power I possess as a minister to young people. To achieve this, I will:

- Never touch a minor in a sexual way or other inappropriate manner.
- Never be alone with a minor in a residence, rectory, sleeping facility, or any other closed room.
- Never share a bed with a minor.
- Never take an overnight trip alone with a minor.
- Never introduce sexually explicit or pornographic topics, vocabulary, music, recordings, films, games, web sites, computer software, or entertainment.
- Never provide drugs, alcohol, or tobacco to a minor.
- Never use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs.
- Never use alcohol when engaged in ministering to a minor.
- Never engage in physical discipline for behavior management of minors. No form of physical discipline is acceptable.

Measures to Aid Observance of the Code of Conduct

To help me keep the promises in the Code, I will:

- Report any suspected child abuse to the proper authorities.
- Avoid physical contact when alone with a minor. Physical contact with minors can be misconstrued, especially in private settings.
- Avoid overnight stays with a minor unless there is another adult present in a supervisory role.
- Avoid providing overnight accommodations for minors in private residences or rectories.
- Avoid driving alone in a vehicle with a minor.

- Refrain from giving expensive or inappropriate gifts to a minor.
- Avoid meeting privately with minors in rooms, offices, or similar areas where there is no window or where the door cannot remain open. If one-on-one pastoral care of a minor is needed (e.g., Sacrament of Reconciliation) avoid meeting in isolated locations.
- Exercise caution in communicating with minors through e-mails or the internet. Only share work/ministry related e-mail addresses with minors. Do not participate in chat rooms with minors.
- Ensure that all activities (extra-curricular, catechetical, youth ministry, scouting, athletics, etc.) for which you are responsible have been approved in advance by the appropriate administrator.
- Have an adequate number of adults present at events. A minimum of two adults in supervisory roles must always be present during activities for minors.
- Release young people only to parents or guardians, unless the parent or guardian has provided permission allowing release to another adult.
- Avoid taking minors away from the parish, school, or agency for field trips, etc. without another adult present in a supervisory role. Obtain written parental permission before such activities. Permission slips should include the type, locations, dates, and times of the activity and emergency contact numbers.

Practical Suggestions

These are some practical suggestions for identifying permissible and impermissible conduct.

Conduct that May Be Permissible

Appropriate affection between Church personnel and minors constitutes a positive part of Church life and ministry. Nonetheless, any touching can be misunderstood and must be considered with great discretion. Depending on the circumstances, the following forms of affection are customarily (but not always) regarded as appropriate.

- Verbal praise.
- Handshakes.
- “High-fives” and hand slapping.
- Pats on the shoulder or back.
- Hugs.
- Holding hands while walking with small children.
- Sitting beside small children.
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children.
- Holding hands during prayer.
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate.

Conduct that is Not Permissible

Some forms of physical affection have been used by adults to initiate inappropriate contact with minors. In order to maintain the safest possible environment for minors, the following are examples of affection that are **not** to be used:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
- Kisses on the mouth.
- Holding minors over four years old on the lap.
- Touching buttocks, chests or genital areas.
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms.
- Touching knees or legs of minors.
- Wrestling with minors.
- Tickling minors.
- Piggyback rides.
- Any type of massage given by minor to adult.
- Any type of massage given by adult to minor.
- Any form of unwanted affection.
- Compliments that relate to physique or body development.

Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Form

Employees and Volunteers

Parish/School/Agency _____

Date _____

I have received a copy of the **Code of Conduct for Church Personnel**. I have read and understand this Code of Conduct, and I agree to abide by it. I have also read and understand the “Measures to Aid Observance of the Code of Conduct” and the “Practical Suggestions” and will employ them to help me observe the code of conduct. A violation of this code can result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination and/or removal from ministry.

Signature

Print Name

Position

The signed Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Form shall be kept in employee personnel files at the agency/parish/school or in a general volunteer file at the agency/parish/school.