



## Code of Conduct when Interacting with a Minor\*

The clergy, candidates for ordination and the religious life, religious, employees and volunteers working in and on behalf of the diocese's schools, parishes, and diocesan offices engage in extensive services and counseling, educational, and spiritual ministries 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 diocese which involves interaction.

The following is a code of conduct which must be observed by all the above-mentioned people when dealing with minors. These guidelines are not intended to prevent a person from performing service or ministry but rather to assist him/her in employing good sense when interacting with minors. If it is necessary to depart from these guidelines due to some extraordinary circumstance, the person should be aware of the departure and must be able to justify one's actions. Consultation with a supervisor regarding the departure is recommended. If one-on-one involvement with a minor is unavoidable, use extreme discretion in those dealings with the minor.

\*A **minor** is defined as anyone under the age of eighteen years; or a person regardless of age who habitually lacks the use of reason and is to be considered equivalent to a minor.

All clergy, candidates for ordination and the religious life, religious, employees and volunteers of the diocese must observe the following guidelines when engaging in ministry to or otherwise interacting with minors:

1. Minors who are not relatives may not stay overnight in a parish rectory in the diocese. No one, except priests and seminarians assigned by the Bishop, may live in a rectory on a long-term basis, that is, for more than a few days.
2. Avoid physical contact with a minor. Never engage in any corporal punishment. In situations where physical contact is necessary and proper, use sound discretion and moderation. If a minor initiates innocent physical contact out of acceptable affection, an appropriate response is proper if not prolonged. Appropriate physical contact includes handshakes, side hugs, high fives. Inappropriate physical contact includes prolonged front-to-front hugging, massages, wrestling, piggyback rides, lap sitting, hitting, pinching.

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, or other closed area. Adults should never shower, bathe, or dress in front of minors and vice versa.
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 to be present at events involving minors, such as games and athletic activities.
6. Youth group trips and school field trips must have enough adult chaperones, preferably of the same gender as participating minors, to provide adequate supervision based upon the type of activity. Adult chaperones should supervise minors of the same gender whenever possible. Minors should have a chaperone of their same gender present on the trip even if it is not the adult assigned to their small group.
7. Never take an overnight trip alone with a minor.
8. Do not drive alone with a minor in a car unless parental permission has been given, preferably in writing.
9. Topics or vocabulary that would not be discussed or used comfortably in the presence of parents should not be discussed or used with minors.
10. Alcohol, in the form of wine, may be given to those under the age of 21 only in very limited quantity and only in preparation for First Communion. Otherwise, never provide alcohol to anyone under the age of 21. Alcohol should not be used by adult supervisors or chaperones if activities with or responsibilities for minors are scheduled.
11. 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 an adult senses that a minor is developing an emotional or physical attraction, the adult should refer the minor to another qualified adult, particularly in counseling situations.
12. If one-on-one counseling, tutoring, or other training or care of a minor requires frequent or regular appointments, parents should be notified that these appointments are occurring and provided the schedule of appointments. If the subject matter properly precludes notification, the adult must consult with and receive the approval of his/her supervisor on the local or diocesan level before engaging in such appointments.

13. All adults have an obligation to take appropriate steps to protect minors, particularly when they are in the care of the church. If an adult observes another adult violating this code or engaging in other conduct which causes him/her to have reason for concern for the well-being of a minor, the adult should confront that other adult in a forthright manner and report his/her concerns to the supervisor, pastor, or Vicar General. If an adult has reason to believe that child abuse or neglect of a minor has occurred or is occurring, that adult must follow the diocesan policy on reporting incidents of abuse and neglect to civil authorities and report the matter to his/her supervisor or the Vicar General at (260) 422-4611.
14. Report the physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect of a minor to appropriate civil and diocesan authorities consistent with the diocese's ***Policy on Reporting Incidents of Abuse or Neglect of a Minor including Vulnerable Adults***; and report the acquisition, possession, and/or distribution of pornography involving any minor to appropriate civil and diocesan authorities consistent with the diocese's ***Policy on Reporting Incidents of Abuse or Neglect of a Minor and Vulnerable Adults***.
15. Refer to and abide by the diocese's ***Policy for All Youth Events Involving Overnight Stay*** for any event for which that policy applies; the diocese's ***Guideline for Small Group Meetings in Homes or on Property Not Owned by the Diocese*** for any events with minors for which that guideline applies; and the diocese's ***Electronic Communication and Technology Policy*** and particularly the section on *Communicating with Minors using Social Media or other Electronic Communication*.