

**Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend
Safe Environment Program**

GUIDELINE FOR CONDUCT WHEN INTERACTING WITH A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON

The priests, deacons, candidates for ordination and the religious life, paid personnel, lay and religious, and volunteers, lay and religious, working in and on behalf of the diocese's schools, parishes, Offices of Catechesis and of Youth Ministry, and other diocesan programs or agencies engage in extensive services with and counseling, educational, and spiritual ministries to children and young persons ("children"). For purposes of this guideline, "children" includes anyone who has not yet reached his or her eighteenth birthday. Children 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 set of guidelines for conduct which must be observed by all the above-mentioned persons when dealing with children. 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 children. 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 child is unavoidable, use extreme discretion in those dealings with the child.

All priests, deacons, candidates for ordination and the religious life, paid personnel, lay and religious, and volunteers, lay and religious of the diocese must observe the following guidelines when engaging in ministry to or otherwise interacting with children:

1. Children who are not relatives may not stay overnight in a parish rectory in the diocese. No one, except priests, may live in a rectory on a long-term basis, that is, for more than a few days.
2. Avoid physical contact with a child. 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 child 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, piggy back 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 child 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 children and vice versa.
4. Any one-on-one counseling, tutoring, training, or other assistance or service with a child 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 children, 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 children, to provide adequate supervision based upon the type of activity. Adult chaperones should supervise children of the same gender whenever possible. Children 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 child.
8. Do not drive alone with a child 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 children.
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 children are scheduled.
11. Always maintain a professional posture in dealing with children. Avoid unwarranted emotional attachment and be aware of the attraction that children may have for adults in positions of authority and trust. If an adult senses that a child is developing an emotional or physical attraction, the adult should refer the child to another qualified adult, particularly in counseling situations.
12. If one-on-one counseling, tutoring, or other training or care of a child 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 children, particularly when they are in the care of the church. If an adult observes another adult violating this guideline or engaging in other conduct which causes him/her to have reason for concern for the well-being of a child, the adult should confront that other adult in a forthright manner and report his/her concerns to the supervisor, pastor, or a Vicar General. If an adult has reason to believe that child abuse or neglect has occurred or is occurring, that adult must follow the diocesan policy on reporting incidents of child abuse to civil authorities and report the matter to his/her supervisor or the Vicar General at (260) 422- 4611.
14. 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 children or young people for which that



guideline applies; and the diocese's ***Social Media Policy*** and particularly the section on *Communicating with Children using Social Media or other Electronic Communication*.

* Guideline located on the diocese's youth protection webpages and in the diocese's employee and volunteer personnel manuals.

