



Diocese of San Jose

Office for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

ADULT CODE OF CONDUCT

Introduction

As adult leaders who work with young people in a variety of parish and diocesan settings, it is important that we be aware of our responsibility for the safety of the young people involved in our programs. Important aspects of our responsibility include clear communication with young people and parents, appropriate supervision for all activities, and proper maintenance of our facilities to reduce the possibility of accidental injury. This Policy has been developed to help create a safe, appropriated environment for minors and their relationship with adults involved in Church ministry. These minor-specific standards are designed to serve as a supplement to the sexual boundary guidelines applicable to all those involved in the ministry of the Catholic Church that are set forth in the Diocese of San Jose's Diocesan Policy Statement on Sexual Misconduct (sec. IV, p 5) and the Diocesan Policy on Sexual Misconduct by Clergy (sec. IV, p 9).

Guidelines Regarding Ministry With Minors

Any and all involvement with minors (i.e., individuals under the age of 18) is to be approached from the premise that minors are restricted individuals. They are NOT independent. Wherever they are and whatever they do is to be with the explicit knowledge and consent of their parents and guardians. They are subject to specific civil laws in the State of California, which may prohibit certain activities. They are not adults and are not permitted unfettered decisions.

Behavioral Guidelines

Each parish should have clear and consistent behavioral guidelines which specify the expected behavior of both adults and young people at all activities. These guidelines should be written and publicized in the promotional materials for activities and programs. Guidelines should be orally reviewed with the participants at the beginning of every program or activity. New participants should also be briefed as they enter into the program.

1. All youth and adults are expected to fully participate in all activities unless otherwise excused. Anyone under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or suspected of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs should not be allowed to participate. Alcohol should not be served at any youth event where young people under the age of 21 are present. This includes all on-site and off-site youth ministry activities.
2. Everyone is expected to respect all other participants in the program or activity. No physical or verbal harassment and no possession of weapons of any kind will be tolerated.

3. All participants are expected to be building community with the entire group. There should be no exclusive coupling during an activity (no kissing, necking, or other intimate or inappropriate sexual activity).
4. Anyone found in violation of these guidelines is subject to immediate dismissal from the activity and may be prohibited from attending future activities.

Adult Leadership

All adult leaders should be persons of maturity possessing sensitivity to adolescents. Adult leaders are expected to demonstrate a consistent behavior which respects his/her own dignity as well as the dignity of the youth. Respect for the individual, for the premises and for the law are integral to adult leaders.

In dealing with minors, it is essential that the adult:

1. Behave in a fashion appropriate for the activity;
2. Never touches in an immodest fashion any youth;
3. Refrains from any sexual, sexist, racist or other inappropriate comments;
4. Refrains from obscene language;
5. Follows the same behavioral guidelines set for the young people, including refraining from alcohol;
6. Avoid situations which place them in a position to be alone with a minor. The only exception is the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Adult/Youth Ratio

It is important to consider the adult to youth ratio for youth events.

1. Adult to High School youth ratio must be a minimum of 1 adult to every 10 High School aged teenager (1:10).
2. Adult to Junior High youth ratio must be a minimum of 1 adult to every 7 Junior High aged teen (1:7).

This general guideline should be understood as a minimum standard and it should be noted that some events will require a higher ratio of adults per youth.

There should always be at least two adults (over the age of 25, one of whom should be of the same gender as the young people) available for on-site and off-site activities. The second adult insures that there is at least one adult present in case of emergency.

The lead adult, adult-in-charge, or supervisor of the activity should be at least 25 years of age. Supervisors between the ages of 21 and 25 are in charge only with the pastor's permission. Young adults 19 years and older may act as additional leaders if they have demonstrated the appropriate maturity and objectivity. They are not considered as part of the one to ten/seven ratio.

Pastoral Care

You may find yourself in the role of counselor for youth. The way in which you respond and what you say may have potential legal implications of which you should be aware. Please know your boundaries. Your role is limited to compassionate listening and spiritual counsel.

Because of mandated reporting laws for the State of California, you are required to report any suspicions of abuse, including reports of domestic violence, to a mandated reporter. Teachers, teacher aides, principals, Directors of Religious Education, members of the health professions, police, firefighters and Clergy members in the State of California are mandated reporters. Child Abuse Neglect (CAN, 408-299-2071) formerly Child Protective Services (CPS) and/or the police department need to be contacted immediately if you have a reasonable suspicion of abuse. Please document all activities.

If you are meeting with a young person in a “one-on-one” situation, please do so in a place where you are not too isolated and where you are visible to others. Leave the door of the room ajar, unless there is a clear window. Make sure you inform another adult that you will be meeting with the child and that someone sees and knows when the young person arrives and leaves.

The adult is responsible to recognize any personal/physical attraction to or from a minor (transference, counter-transference). In such a situation, the minor should be immediately referred to another qualified adult. The adult is responsible to maintain clear and healthy boundaries.