

# **Standards of Behavior for Working with Minors**



## **St. Procopius Abbey**

**5601 College Road • Lisle, IL 60532**

**(630) 969-6410**

**[www.procopius.org](http://www.procopius.org)**

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## Introduction

The following guidelines and standards of behavior are intended to assist Abbey personnel in making decisions about interactions with minors on Abbey property or in Abbey sponsored and affiliated programs. Abbey personnel include all members (postulants, novices, and professed monks) and anyone acting as an agent of the Abbey. The guidelines and standards do not supersede state law or Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) requirements.

Volunteers and employees of Benedictine University or Benet Academy are not by that fact agents of the Abbey.

Even when not partaking in Abbey sponsored or affiliated programs, members (postulants, novices, and professed monks) are to follow these standards. Members must also make sure that, when they are off Abbey property, they follow the standards for working with minors that are required in the place (e.g., the standards required in the diocese in which one is ministering).

These standards are not designed or intended to address interactions within families.

A minor is anyone under the age of 18. A vulnerable adult is considered the equivalent of a minor in this policy. A vulnerable adult is an adult who habitually lacks the use of reason or who, due to mental or physical disability, is incapable of protecting him- or herself from sexual abuse. Further, the norms of these *Standards of Behavior for Working with Minors* should be applied to any current student of Benet Academy, even if 18 or older.

Abuse and neglect of minors are contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church and are prohibited. Abbey personnel have a responsibility to protect minors from all forms of abuse and neglect.

If anyone knows of or has reasonable cause to believe there was an incident of sexual abuse of a minor, he or she should report it promptly to civil authorities. They should also notify the Abbot, Prior, or Subprior, if the alleged perpetrator is Abbey personnel. If anyone is concerned about the behavior of someone affiliated with the Abbey, but the matter does not

amount to sexual abuse (for example, someone is violating certain guidelines below), still that person is encouraged to share his or her concerns with the Abbot, Prior, or Subprior (Abbey phone number is 630-969-6410).

## **A. General guidelines**

1. Ministry to minors respects the rights of parents to educate and form their children in faith. Therefore, activities with minors are to be conducted with the explicit knowledge and consent of parents or legal guardians.
2. At the close of a service or activity, Abbey personnel are not to leave minors in their care unattended. After an event minors are to be released in the manner agreed upon with their parents or legal guardians (this may be specified in the parental consent form). If there is uncertainty about how to release a minor, Abbey personnel are to contact their supervisor before releasing the minor.
3. Abbey personnel are to report uncontrollable or highly unusual behavior of minors to parents as soon as possible.
4. Abbey personnel are prohibited from the use, possession or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while working with minors. They are also prohibited from furnishing alcohol or illegal drugs to minors or permitting minors to use such in their presence.
5. Abbey personnel may occasionally provide transportation for minors. The following guidelines should be observed when Abbey personnel are involved in the transportation of minors:
  - a. Minors are never to be transported without approval of parents or legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians.
  - b. Minors are to be transported directly to their destination. No unauthorized stops are to be made.
  - c. Abbey personnel are to avoid unnecessary and/or inappropriate physical contact with minors while in vehicles.
6. Abbey personnel are prohibited from speaking to

minors in a way that is abusive or demeaning. All are to refrain from using inappropriate language or humor in the presence of minors.

7. Abbey personnel are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with minors. However, it is expected that in certain ministerial situations (e.g., confession) and in classes Abbey personnel may address human sexuality issues. In these situations, Abbey personnel will convey the Church's views on the topics. If minors have other questions not answered or addressed, they should be referred to their parents or guardians. Abbey personnel are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with minors.
8. Abbey personnel are never to be nude in the presence of minors. Changing and showering facilities for adults are to be separate from those for minors.
9. Abbey personnel are prohibited from possessing any morally inappropriate sexual materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.).
10. Abbey personnel are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds, sleeping bags or small tents with minors.
11. Minors are not allowed in the cell of a monk. However, in the case of the sick or elderly monks who reside in the Infirmary or on the third floor, a minor may visit their cells if accompanied by a parent or legal guardian the whole time.
12. Abbey personnel are not to meet individually with a minor in a secluded area, but must do so in an open area where others can see them. If a room is used for a meeting, there should be a transparent window or the door is to be left open. This guideline applies to when offering counsel or hearing a confession.
13. All communications (verbal, electronic, printed, handwritten, etc.) and all sharing of materials (magazines, books, printed images, digital images, computer files, etc.) should follow the guidelines in this policy, most notably nos. 6-9 above. Communications include, but are not limited to, emails, text messages, handwritten notes, tweets, blogs, etc. Sharing of materials includes, but is not limited to, sharing newspaper clippings or magazine articles, sharing digital photographs, hyperlinking

internet articles or websites, sharing contact information, etc. When it is necessary to communicate or to share materials with minors, this should be limited, appropriate, and able, if necessary, to withstand public scrutiny. Moreover, Abbey personnel are not to communicate with minors on internet chat rooms.

14. Everyone with a St. Procopius Abbey email account should only use that account in ways that are consistent with the mission and values of the Abbey and that comply with the guidelines of this policy.

## **B. Physical Contact**

St. Procopius Abbey implements a physical contact policy that will promote a positive, nurturing, safe environment for children and youth ministries while protecting both children and Abbey personnel from misunderstandings. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Abbey personnel working with children and in youth programs.

1. Abbey personnel are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for behavior management of minors. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by minors.
2. Appropriate affection between Abbey personnel and minors constitutes a positive part of Church life and ministry but should be given in public, not in isolated or secluded areas. The following forms of affection are regarded as appropriate examples for members in ministry roles with minors:
  - a. Side hugs.
  - b. Shoulder to shoulder hugs.
  - c. Pats on the shoulder or back.
  - d. Handshakes.
  - e. “High-fives” and hand slapping.
  - f. Verbal praise.
  - g. Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of

- minors.
  - h. Arms around shoulders.
  - i. Holding hands while walking with small children.
  - j. Sitting beside small children.
  - k. Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children.
  - l. Holding hands during prayer.
  - m. Pats on the head when culturally appropriate (for example, this gesture should typically be avoided in some Asian communities).
  - n. Reciprocation of appropriate gestures initiated by a minor.
3. Some forms of physical affection have been used 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 in Abbey sponsored and affiliated programs:
- a. Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
  - b. Kissing on the mouth or any inappropriate area.
  - c. Holding minors over four years old on the lap.
  - d. Touching buttocks, chests or genital areas.
  - e. Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms.
  - f. Being in bed with a minor.
  - g. Touching knees or legs of minors.
  - h. Wrestling with minors.
  - i. Tickling minors.
  - j. Piggyback rides.
  - k. Any type of massage given by minor to adult
  - l. Any type of massage given by adult to minor.
  - m. Any form of unwanted affection.
  - n. Compliments that relate to physique or body development.

### **C. Undue Attention**

Certain conduct has been used by adults to develop inappropriate relationships with minors. Activities include

singling out minors or showing them unusual attention. Some examples of this behavior prohibited for Abbey personnel are:

1. Presenting gifts to a minor that would not ordinarily be given to an entire group of children, excluding awards, etc.
2. Allowing a minor to drive an Abbey automobile even though another adult may be present.
3. Singling out a particular child for special dinners, events, trips or outings.

#### **D. Programs with Minors**

1. No programs in which Abbey personnel are acting as chaperones for minors on Abbey property or in Abbey sponsored or affiliated events are to be done without the knowledge of an Abbey superior.
2. When minors work or volunteer at the Abbey, a written consent form signed by a parent or legal guardian for the work or volunteer activity must be obtained and kept in file. In the case of a long term agreement to work or volunteer (e.g., through the Saint Wenceslaus Server Society), a one-time consent form for the year suffices.
  - a. Consent forms will explicitly mention these *Standards of Behavior for Working with Minors* and will state the right of a parent, legal guardian, or the minor to disclose behavior not in accord with these standards.
  - b. Consent forms may clarify what the parent or legal guardian considers an acceptable way of releasing the minor after an activity.
  - c. Forms to record parental consent will be available through the Abbot's office.
3. In the case of the orchard, vineyard, or garden volunteer operations, Abbey personnel are not to assume chaperone responsibilities for minors who are volunteering. Instead, any minor who is volunteering to work in these operations must be accompanied either:
  - a. by a parent or legal guardian;
  - b. or by a parentally approved chaperone from an

outside organization.

4. Minors are not allowed to reside overnight in the Abbey unless the minor is accompanied either by a parent, legal guardian, or a parentally approved chaperone from an outside organization.
5. Minors are not allowed in the Abbey's house at Pistakee Lake or its cabin at Sailor Lake, except when the following conditions are met:
  - a. the minor is accompanied either by a parent, legal guardian, or a parentally approved chaperone from an outside organization;
  - b. a parental consent form is obtained;
  - c. the Abbot has explicitly approved the trip.

### **E. Requirements for Abbey personnel who Work with Minors**

1. Abbey personnel who work with minors shall:
  - a. review these *Standards of Behavior for Working with Minors* and agree in writing to comply with them (forms to record this agreement are available through the Abbot's office);
  - b. for non-members, consent to an appropriate background check (forms approving the release of this information are available through the Abbot's office);
  - c. receive instruction that addresses their role in protecting minors, such as provided in the *Protecting God's Children* workshop.
2. Although not acting as chaperones, those overseeing volunteer operations for the orchard, vineyard, or garden must meet the requirements named immediately above.