

Standards of Behavior for Interacting with Minors

**St. Procopius Abbey
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Introduction

The following guidelines and standards of behavior are for assisting Abbey personnel in making decisions about interactions with minors on Abbey property or in Abbey sponsored and affiliated programs. For this policy Abbey personnel include all members (postulants, novices, claustral oblates, and professed monks) and anyone acting as an agent of the Abbey (e.g., an employee of the Abbey). Volunteers and employees of Benedictine University or Benet Academy are not by that fact agents of the Abbey, nor are oblates of the Abbey. These guidelines and standards do not supersede State law, Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) requirements, or Church law.

Members (postulants, novices, claustral oblates, and professed monks) are to follow these guidelines and standards even when not partaking in Abbey sponsored and affiliated programs. Members must also make sure that, when they are off Abbey property, they follow the standards for interacting with minors that are required in the place (e.g., the standards required in the diocese in which one is ministering). Although non-members who are acting as agents of the Abbey (e.g., employees) are not bound by these standards when their interactions with minors are not on Abbey property and not part of Abbey sponsored and affiliated programs, still they should, of course, always avoid inappropriate interactions with minors.

A minor is anyone under the age of 18. A vulnerable adult is considered the equivalent of a minor in this policy; thus, what this policy says about minors also applies to vulnerable adults. A vulnerable adult is an adult whose use of reason is habitually impaired. Further, any current student of Benet Academy, even if 18 or older, is to be considered the equivalent of a minor in these *Standards of Behavior for Interacting with Minors*. These guidelines and standards are also to be applied to interactions with minors who are family members, unless an exception is noted.

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 that there was an incident of sexual abuse of a minor, he or she should immediately report this to the DCFS. Also, when the alleged perpetrator of the abuse is or was Abbey personnel, the person should also promptly report this to the Abbot or, in his absence or if the allegation is against him, to the Prior or Subprior. Moreover, members (postulants, novices, claustral oblates, and professed monks) should consult the Responding Policy Section II for further requirements about reporting.

The DCFS may be contacted through its Hotline at 1-800-252-2873 or 1-800-ABUSE. The Abbey phone number is 630-969-6410.

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 or, in his absence or if the concern is about him, the Prior or Subprior. In the case of a member being concerned about the behavior of another member, the concerned member is encouraged, if comfortable, to discuss the concern with the member exhibiting the behavior, in addition to reporting it to the appropriate superior as just noted.

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 unattended minors who are in their care. 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 or legal guardians 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 interacting 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 are discouraged from riding in automobiles with minors. If one does ride in an automobile with a minor, the following guidelines need to be observed.
 - a. The transportation must have the approval of the minor's parent, legal guardian, or parentally approved chaperone from an outside organization.
 - b. Unauthorized or unnecessary stops are not to be made on the way to the destination.
 - 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 legal 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.). Further note that the possession, distribution, downloading, and/or intentional viewing of images of child abuse or child pornography will be considered tantamount to the sexual abuse of a minor and is to be reported as such.
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, other social media posts or messages, 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 interacting 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 with minors on Abbey property or in Abbey sponsored and affiliated programs:
- a. Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
 - b. Kissing (with the exception of family members, when this is in keeping with socially appropriate norms and family traditions).
 - 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, tickling, or piggyback rides (with the exception of family members, when this is in keeping with socially appropriate norms and family traditions).
 - i. Any type of massage given by minor to adult
 - j. Any type of massage given by adult to minor.
 - k. Any form of unwanted affection.

C. Undue Attention

- 1. 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:
 - a. Presenting gifts to a minor that would not ordinarily be given to an entire group of children, excluding awards, etc.
 - b. Allowing a minor to drive an Abbey automobile.
 - c. Singling out a particular child for special dinners, events, trips or outings.
 - d. Complimenting a minor’s physique or body development.

D. Programs with Minors

1. No programs in which Abbey personnel are acting as chaperones for minors on Abbey property or in Abbey sponsored and affiliated events are to be done without the knowledge of the Abbot, Prior, or Subprior.
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 Interacting 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. 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 Interact with Minors

1. Abbey personnel who work with minors shall:
 - a. review these *Standards of Behavior for Interacting 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.