



Diocese of St. Petersburg Code of Conduct for Adults Working with Minors

Any form of sexual misconduct is sinful. It is a violation of the sixth commandment, and it is a “failure in genuine love for God and neighbor, caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods” (CCC 1849). Certain forms of sexual misconduct may also be criminal. Adults, including and especially Church Personnel (hereafter referred to as “Adults”), who engage in any form of sexual misconduct with minors violate the ministerial relationship of trust by misusing their authority to take advantage of the vulnerability of those they serve. Because of the unique position of those in ministerial service, there is always an absence of meaningful consent to **any** sexual activity.

It is the responsibility of Adults to maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries with those with whom they work or serve. While it is not possible to identify every form of inappropriate conduct that violates a person’s boundaries, the following section includes behaviors that should be practiced, as well as those that are to be avoided.

Church Personnel/Volunteers will:

- Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Try to avoid situations in which one is alone with a child at Church activities.
- Use positive reinforcement with children and youth rather than criticism, competition, or comparison.
- Refuse to accept expensive gifts from children and youth or parents without previous written approval of the pastor or administrator.
- Refrain from giving expensive gifts to children or youth without prior approval of the parents or guardian and the pastor or administrator.
- Report actual or reasonably suspected abuse to the Department of Children and Families (DCF Abuse Hotline: 800-962-2873), and the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator (1-866-407-4505). The Pastor/Administrator or Principal must also be notified.
- Be familiar with the Diocese of St. Petersburg Safe Environment Policy for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children or youth.
- Demonstrate respect for the teachings of the Church as well as the provisions of secular and canon law.
- Provide appropriate adult supervision of minors.

Church Personnel/Volunteers are not to:

- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children to whom they are not related.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time while volunteering.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while volunteering.

- Pose any health risk to children and youth. If the employee or volunteer is ill, he/she should stay home.
- Strike, spank, shake, or slap children and youth.
- Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade children and youth.
- Touch a child in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates children and youth.
- Use profanity in the presence of children and youth.
- Engage in any conversation of a sexual nature which does not comport with church teaching.
- Wear sexually suggestive or immodest attire.
- Show sexually suggestive objects or pornography*.
- Use any electronic device, desktop, laptop, tablet, mobile phone or any other means to accessing the internet to view pornographic* images of any type.
- Examine the genitalia of any person for any reason.
- Provide free medical advice or medical procedures unless authorized or are required by law.
- Administer drugs, including over-the-counter medication, in the absence of express written permission.
- Offer a prolonged hug when a brief hug is customary behavior, behavior must be initiated by the child.
- Kiss any part of the body of a minor.
- Invite children and young people to one's home unsupervised or for overnight stays, even with the permission of the parent or guardian.
- All Adults are required to comply with the Policies of the Diocese of St. Petersburg, including but not limited to the *Policy for Social Media*.

*According to the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, the federal legal age for defining child pornography includes pornographic images of minors under the age of eighteen.

Behaviors that raise serious concerns with respect to maintaining a safe environment for children include, but are not limited to:

- Acting like a peer around children and youth rather than an adult
- Failure to set appropriate limits with children
- Indications of anxiety regarding adult sexuality
- Overly anxious in interviews or under supervision
- Success in getting around the rules
- No sense of responsibility for one's actions
- Keeping secrets with children and youth
- Allowing special relationships with or giving gifts to an individual child or youth
- Allowing individuals to break some rules (favoritism)

PLEASE NOTE: Any action inconsistent with this Code of Conduct or failure to act appropriately as mandated by the same may result in the removal of an individual as a volunteer with children and youth.