

## §II-7002.2 Ministry to Minors and Dependent Adults

*Because of its extensive ministries to minors and dependent adults, the Church perhaps has more involvement with these individuals than many other organizations. These individuals have no choice but to be dependent upon adults, particularly those adults in positions of trust and leadership.*

### **II-7002.2 Policy**

It is vitally important that prudence be exercised by all adults in both ministerial and social relationships with minors and dependent adults. In the case of at-risk individuals who are extremely vulnerable, adults should be particularly cautious and sensitive. It is expected that those who deal with these individuals consult regularly with appropriate supervisors.

Following is a set of procedures for all clergy, religious, lay employees, and volunteers of the Diocese of Davenport and anyone using church property in dealing with or in the presence of minors and dependent adults. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive but rather to serve as some general principles. At the same time, they are not intended to prevent the performance of ministry but rather to assist in employing good sense in dealing with minors and dependent adults. If it is necessary to depart from these guidelines, adults should be aware of any departure and be able to justify their actions. There are times when one-on-one involvement is unavoidable. In these cases, extreme discretion should be used in relationships with these individuals. Proceed as a prudent person would in similar circumstances.

### **Procedures**

- a) Avoid inappropriate physical contact when alone with minors and dependent adults. In other situations where physical contact is necessary and proper, such as in certain moments in the celebration of the sacraments, use sound discretion and moderation. If a person initiates physical contact out of affection, a response is appropriate if it is not prolonged.
- b) Do not be alone with a minor in a residence, sleeping facilities, a locker room, restroom, a dressing facility or other closed rooms that are less desirable to a ministry relationship.
- c) Seek responsible adults to be present at events involving minors, such as games and athletic activities.
- d) Groups of minors should rarely be left alone. Youth group trips must have enough adult chaperones to provide adequate supervision based upon the type of activity.
- e) Do not take an overnight trip alone with a minor or minors.
- f) Inappropriate language (including profanity) or inappropriate conversation topics should not be used. When people initiate such conversations or use such language in order to seek help or because they lack appropriate vocabulary, you should remain prudent and sensitive.
- g) Do not provide alcohol to anyone under the age of 21. (Wine appropriately used in the celebration of the Eucharist is an exception to this directive.)
- h) Avoid inviting a minor by himself or herself into your house or automobile.
- i) Always maintain a professional posture in dealing with people, avoiding emotional attachment and being aware of the powerful attraction of adults in positions of authority and trust. If one recognizes personal or physical attraction developing, consult a supervisor or refer the person to another qualified adult, particularly in counseling situations.

- j) If one-on-one pastoral care of a minor should require frequent or regular appointments, parents should be notified that these appointments are occurring. If the subject matter precludes such notification, the minister should consult his or her supervisor.
- k) When practical, two adult supervisors should be present for any church activity outside the classroom situation. Whenever two adults are not present, the adult should refrain from being alone with a minor unless necessary for the nature of the ministry. In those instances, the adult should be in clear view, e.g., through a window or an open door.
- l) Volunteers should be invited to work with minors or dependent adults only after they are known to some degree within the parish or Diocese. For those volunteers not known, a six-month time period to get to know that person would be required. Background checks will also be done in accordance with these policies.
- m) No person should ever strike, bully or purposely humiliate, ridicule, threaten, harm or degrade anyone.
- n) Drivers on trips must be 21 years of age or older with vehicle insurance and a valid driver's license. They must complete a Driver Information Sheet and attach to it a copy of their driver's license and vehicle declaration page listing insurance coverage annually or if information changes. The Driver Information Sheet is retained locally.
- o) All people have an obligation to protect minors and dependent adults, particularly when they are in the care of the Church.
- p) If there is reason to believe that anyone is violating these directives, the person should be challenged in a forthright manner or reported to a supervisor. If there is reason to suspect that child abuse has occurred in a diocesan related entity, this matter must be reported to the supervisor or to the Victim Assistance Coordinator of the Diocese. Mandatory or permissive reports must also be made to the proper authorities. (see Appendix C)
- q) Adult supervisors of outside entities that use church property for overnight events in the presence of minors or vulnerable adults must produce a letter of good standing from their sponsoring organization and proof of safe environment training that includes background checks.