

## Standards of Behavior for Those Working with Minors

To foster and maintain an atmosphere of trust and safety in our programs that serve minors, the following *Standards of Behavior for Those Working with Minors* apply to all staff and volunteers who engage in direct work with individuals age 17 and younger. Catholic Charities expects all agency personnel and volunteers to maintain the highest standards of professional and ethical behavior in our delivery of services to minors.

### General Definitions

“Minor” refers to anyone under the age of 18 and, for the purposes of these standards, the term “minors” also includes adults who would be considered vulnerable to abuse because of physical or mental disabilities.

The following guidelines are intended to provide information about your conduct in order to prevent abuse or unfounded allegations of abuse. You have a duty to the minor with whom you work, but also a duty to Catholic Charities and yourself to prevent any accusations of abuse or improper behavior.

- Never engage in any aggressive horseplay or sexually provocative games with a minor, even as a joke.
- Do not ask minors to sit on your lap.
- Allow minors to express affection on their own terms; do not request a hug or kiss from a minor.
- Never use any form of physical or emotional punishment to discipline a minor or to tease a minor.
- Respect the minor’s need for privacy, especially in restrooms or changing rooms.
- Don’t swear around minor or make sexually suggestive comments, even in fun.
- Don’t ask a minor, particularly teens or preteens, about their sexuality.
- Do not appear to favor one minor over the others in your care.
- Don’t give special gifts or trinkets to just one minor.
- Do not offer to take the minor home or on any special outings one-on-one.
- Never tell a minor to keep any type of secret from their parents. Don’t say things like “This is just between us...”
- Avoid being alone with one minor away from the others, particularly in a restroom, shower, or changing area.
- Follow the rule of 3: It is preferable to take another person with you if you must accompany a minor to the restroom or other secluded area.
- Activities with minor should be conducted in as public an environment as possible in order that all behavior can be readily observed.
- While on site, keep doors open and windows uncovered by drapes or shades.
- Be aware of situations which could be misinterpreted, including being alone with the last minor to leave an activity.
- Don’t tease a minor or use guilt tactics if they are setting their own personal or physical boundaries with you.
- Do not give any minor a ride in a car or van unless you have express permission from the parents. See **Transportation of Clients** policy and procedure for more information.
- When coming back from a field trip, check in with the minor’s parent or guardian during drop-off to debrief them on the activity.

- Minors should always use the “buddy system” or otherwise be encouraged to stay together when going to the bathroom, on field trips, or when leaving a classroom or activity area.
- Be professional and maintain the highest standard of personal behavior at all times
- Do not smoke or drink alcohol when working with minors.
- Remain alert to any inappropriate actions of others. Trust your instincts.

**Child Abuse Reporting**

See **Abuse and Neglect Reporting** policy and procedures

**Working with Minors**

See **Working with Minors** policy and procedure

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