

DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS
Creating a Safer Environment

Practical Guidelines for Volunteers

Know the warning signs of inappropriate relationships with children/youth:

1. Adults who discourage other adults from participating or monitoring them
2. Adults who want to be alone with children or are more excited to be with youth than with adults
3. Adults who go overboard touching, or want to wrestle or tickle
4. Adults who believe the rules do not apply to them
5. Adults who allow children to engage in activities their parents or Diocesan policy would not allow
6. Adults who use bad language, tell dirty jokes to youth, or show children pornography

Be alert and monitor other adult volunteers and address any concerns with that person or the program director.

Never meet alone with children.

Work in pairs (two-deep ministry) during all youth programs.

Do not permit children to enter staff-only or adult-only areas.

Do not conduct youth-related activities in private homes or secluded areas.

Do not contact youth using private e-mail, texting, or any method that cannot be monitored by parish or school personnel.

Sustain respectful ministerial relationships, avoiding manipulation and other abuses of power. Physical, sexual, or romantic relationships between an adult volunteer and a minor are unethical and are prohibited.

Model healthy and positive behaviors with minors. Procuring, providing, or using alcohol and/or controlled substances for or with minors is unethical and is prohibited.

Be aware of limitations with respect to paraprofessional counseling and make appropriate referrals.

Be aware of and comply with all applicable parish, organizational and/or diocesan policies with special attention to sexual misconduct, safety, transportation, parental permission, and medical emergencies.

Be aware of and watch for signs of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse and neglect.

Report suspected abuse or neglect. *In Ohio, suspected abuse should be reported to the county child protection agency or county sheriff's department.*

For additional resources and information on safe environment policy, standards or protocol, volunteers can ask their program director or visit The Safe Environment Office website:

<https://columbuscatholic.org/safe/policies>