



ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

Youth Protection Policy and Procedure

Code of Conduct

This Policy cannot capture all behavior constituting sexual misconduct or abuse. Youth Workers and Volunteers must ensure that their conduct is caring and proper given each situation and that reasonable boundaries are maintained. This Code of Conduct is for the protection of youth, but adherence also protects adults from false allegations and accusations based on misunderstandings. Youth Workers and Youth Volunteers who violate the provisions of this Policy are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination and expulsion from the parish.

Prohibited behavior

Youth Workers must use good judgment and always act above reproach, striving to avoid even the appearance of impropriety. Youth Workers are representatives of God and should act as such. The following are prohibited behaviors with youth.

Inappropriate Physical Contact

Youth Workers are prohibited from engaging in any sexual activity with youth regardless of the age of the youth or the proximity in age of the Youth Worker to the youth. Prohibited physical behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Sexual contact or touching a youth's breasts, legs, genitals, buttocks (other than for diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers)
- Kissing the mouth or any other body parts, other than culturally appropriate kisses on the cheeks
- Any physical contact that the youth previously has indicated is unwelcome, unless such contact is necessary, e.g., to protect the safety of the youth or others;
- Inappropriate or lengthy hugs or other signs of affection
- Having children over three years old sitting on the lap
- Wrestling, tickling, massaging, horseplay, or other prolonged physical contact
- Occupying a bed or lying together
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear

Inappropriate Verbal Interactions

Youth Workers must not speak to Church youth in any manner that is unbecoming of a representative of Christ, including but not limited to:

- Flirting, making sexual advances, and seeking romantic or sexual relationships
- Conversations or comments of a sexual nature (except as part of a legitimate ministry discussion)
- Compliments or comments relating to physique or body development
- Making sexual or derogatory comments, gestures, or jokes
- Cursing, using profane language or taking the Lord's name in vain
- Name-calling, shaming, demeaning, or belittling others
- Telling secrets or gossip or instructing youth to keep a secret
- Threatening violence



Other prohibited behaviors

Possessing Sexually Oriented Materials - Youth Workers must not view or possess any sexually oriented videos, websites, photos, media, or intimate clothing of the opposite sex, etc. (except as part of a pre-authorized educational program).

Controlled substances - Youth Workers must not use, possess, distribute, or be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or other controlled substances.

Discrimination and Favoritism – Youth Workers will avoid favoritism among youth and should endeavor to interact equally with all youth, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture, or socio-economic status.

Harsh Verbal Interactions - Youth Workers shall not speak to youth in a way that is, or could reasonably be construed to be, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

Physical Punishment - Youth Workers must not use physical punishment in any way on youth. However, force may be used only to the extent necessary to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the youth, him/herself, or to others.

Immodest clothing. Youth Workers should set a good example by wearing clothing that is not sexually suggestive.

Encouraged behavior

Youth Workers should regard their relationship with Christ seriously and cultivate it on an ongoing basis. Everything a Youth Worker says and does in the presence of youth should be meant to exemplify Christ and model a godly lifestyle.

Appropriate Physical Contact

Examples of appropriate physical contact include, for example:

- Friendly hugs and arms around shoulders
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes, high-fives, hand slapping, and fist-bumping
- Light touching of hands, shoulders, and arms
- Holding hands in appropriate situations (e.g. escorting young children; dance classes)
- Sitting beside young children without contact
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with young children
- Kissing of cheeks when culturally appropriate

All physical contact should be brief and unambiguous in meaning.

Appropriate Verbal Interactions

Examples of encouraged verbal interactions include, for example:

- Positive reinforcement
- Appropriate jokes
- Encouragement
- Verbal Praise