

Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic
Woodland Park, New Jersey

Safe Environment Code of Conduct with Minors

The following code of conduct, adopted by the Eparchy of Passaic, is an absolute and essential tool for Church personnel to carry on any ministry with minors (persons under the age of 18). It is directed at promoting open and trustworthy relationships between minors and adults. Its reference to “Church Personnel” is to be understood as including Bishops, Priests and Deacons, with faculties to function in the eparchy of Passaic, minor clerics, and seminarians of the Eparchy, those enrolled in the Diaconate Formation Program, men and women religious working in the Eparchy, lay ecclesial ministers, employees, and volunteers.

1. Those working with minors shall have training appropriate to their level of responsibility.
2. Appropriate contact between church personnel and minors can contribute to a minor’s development and is a positive part of Church and ministry.
3. Inappropriate contact between church personnel and minors can cause harm to a minor’s development and well-being, and should never occur. Sexualized touch is never appropriate. Contact that is “secret” is not appropriate.
4. Those who work with minors should be aware that physical contact can be misconstrued. They should be aware of a minor’s vulnerability as well as their own.
5. Church personnel who work with minors should seek and receive eparchial approved training on appropriate and inappropriate physical contact with minors.
6. Working alone with minors should be avoided unless dictated by pastoral need such as Holy Confession or spiritual counseling. Adequate staffing should be available to manage emergency situations. Great care should be taken to ensure that a safe environment is provided on those rare occasions when it is necessary to work alone with a minor.
7. Driving alone with a minor should be avoided unless required by emergent need.
8. Church personnel shall refrain from (a) the illegal possession and/or illegal use of alcohol and other drugs at all times, and (b) the use of alcohol when working with minors.
9. Church personnel shall never provide minors with alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco products, pornography or other inappropriate material.
10. Church personnel shall never physically discipline minors.

11. Designated living quarters of priests and religious are exclusively for their use. It is permissible for close family members who are minors, with the consent of their parent or guardian, to have occasional overnight visits. Other minors are permitted to visit overnight only when accompanied by his or her parent or guardian. Exceptions to this policy are rare and requests with details must be made in writing to the Eparchial Bishop. [Example: well chaperoned discernment retreat experience.]
12. It is inappropriate for an adult to share a bed or a tent with a minor when on a trip. Sharing a bedroom, other than a large group dormitory style room, should always be avoided. Exceptions can be made for a parent or guardian who requests to room with his or her child.
13. It is not appropriate for adult church personnel to date or give appearance of dating a minor, engage in sexualized contact with a minor, give significant gifts, or grant special privileges or opportunities to a specific minor.
14. It is not appropriate for church personnel to accept expensive gifts from minors or their parents or guardians. Any exceptions must be granted through the supervisor.
15. Church personnel shall exercise respect and care for vulnerable individuals who due to developmental, psychological, or emotional distress due to personal life issues, may lack use of reason for an extended or limited period of time.
16. The possession, use and/or dissemination of pornography is an activity that violates the dignity of the human person created in the image of God and can possibly be both a civil and/or canonical crime. As such, possession, use and/or dissemination of any type of such material by clergy, employees and volunteers serving in the Eparchy of Passaic is absolutely unacceptable.
17. The use of technology and social media to engage in any sexual misconduct by church personnel is forbidden.
18. Information provided on permission forms should be viewed or disclosed by church personnel only on a “need to know basis” or with permission.
19. Church personnel who observe inappropriate contact or interaction with minors should report it immediately to a supervisor (Pastor, Religious Education Director, Youth Minister, activity coordinator) or the Eparchial Coordinator. When there is reason to believe that abuse has occurred, the observer must make a report to the appropriate social services agency or the police.