

*Diocese of Gaylord*



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Staff

## Protocols for Ministry to Minors

The following Protocols for Ministry to Minors are applicable to all persons (clergy, religious, school/program administrators, school counselors, teachers, catechists, youth ministers, support staff, coaches, school/program volunteers) employed by or a volunteer in any of the parishes and institutions of the Diocese of Gaylord. These protocols are to help in the creation of a safe, appropriate, and Christian environment for minors and their relationships with adults in church ministry. (Adopted May, 1996)

### Ministry to Minors:

- 1) Minors should always be viewed -- whether in a social or ministerial situation -- as the restricted individuals they are, that is, they are not independent. Wherever they are and whatever they do should be with the explicit knowledge of the parents or guardian. Also, they are subject to specific civil laws in their own proper state and city which may prohibit certain activities. They are not adults and are not permitted unfettered decisions. Any and all involvement should be approached from this premise.
- 2) Caution and professional attitudes are to be observed in all interactions with minors.
- 3) An adult should attempt never to be alone with a minor in the rectory, parish residence, school or parish facility, or in a closed room.
- 4) In meeting/counseling situations involving a minor, excluding sacramental reconciliation, the presence or proximity of another adult is encouraged. However, in those situations where the presence of another adult is not usual or practical (e.g., piano lessons, disciplinary meeting with administrator, etc.), the doorway should be left opened if at all practical.
- 5) A minor should be allowed only in the professional section of a rectory or parish residence; not in the living quarters.
- 6) Minors should be permitted to work in the rectory, parish residence, school or parish facility only when there are at least two adults present.
- 7) An adult should not engage in games or other sports activities with one minor unless a second adult is present.
- 8) A group of minors should only engage in games or sports activities in the presence or proximity of at least one adult.
- 9) An adult should try to avoid being the only adult in a bathroom, locker room or other dressing area whenever minors are using such facilities.
- 10) Youth group trips should have at least one adult chaperone for every ten minors.
- 11) While on youth group trips, the adults should maintain a professional stature and socialize appropriately with students.
- 12) One adult should never engage in an overnight trip with a minor.
- 13) While on youth group trips, the adults should never stay alone overnight in the same motel/hotel room with a minor, even if there are two beds.
- 14) Adults should take care to avoid the risk of becoming a father/mother figure to a minor.
- 15) Comments of a sexual nature should generally not be made to any minor except in response to a specific classroom, or otherwise legitimate, question from a minor.
- 16) Topics or vocabulary which could not comfortably be used in the presence of parents or another adult should not be utilized in the presence of a minor/minors.

17) Adults should never supply or serve alcohol or any controlled substance to minors. On those occasions when alcohol is served or consumed as part of a parish or school social activity, the alcohol must only be served and consumed by adults. Minors present should be supervised and denied access to alcohol.

18) Adults are not to engage in any pornographic material to include the acquisition, possession, and distribution of child pornography.

19) Reflection on the words of Christ regarding children is a healthy meditation before any involvement with a minor/minors, and a salutary reflection and examination after each involvement. (Mt. 18:6; Mk 9:42; Lk 17:2; Mk 10:13-16).

20) The sacristy door of the church should always be open whenever minors are present within the sacristy.

21) The Sacrament of Reconciliation should be celebrated in the place in the church so designated for this purpose. Only extreme inconvenience or impossibility would be an acceptable excuse.

#### Counseling Minors:

1) The counseling of a minor must take place only in the professional portion of a rectory or school/parish facility.

2) The office or classroom door should have a window or be left open during counseling.

3) If possible, another adult should be in close proximity during any counseling session.

4) Unless the subject matter precludes their presence or knowledge, parents or guardians of minors should be made aware of the counseling session.

5) The relationship between adult and minor must always remain professional during the counseling session.

6) An adult should try to recognize any personal/physical attraction to or from a minor, and the minor should then be referred to another qualified adult or licensed professional.

7) If counseling is expected to extend beyond two sessions, evaluation of the situation should be made with the parents or guardian, an advisor, or licensed professional.

8) Careful and appropriate boundaries concerning physical contact with a minor must be observed at all times.