

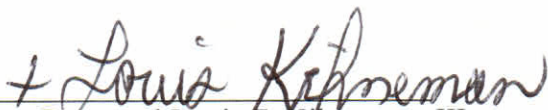
Diocesan Code of Conduct Regarding Contact with Minors and Vulnerable Adults

We are all aware of reports involving the abuse of minors by persons in positions of trust. While persons who would do such reprehensible things constitute a small minority of the population, this notoriety can lead to otherwise innocent behavior being misconstrued. Also, although a minority, we must not forget that persons who would harm our children do exist and it is morally imperative for us to do all we can to safeguard our children. Both of these interests can be served by an established code of behavior consistent with Christian values and Catholic Church teachings.

This policy covers all priests, deacons, religious, pastoral ministers, administrators, staff, employees and volunteers. This policy presupposes that the minor is not the child of the person, since we are generally not in a position to proscribe conduct between a parent and child.

1. No form of corporal punishment is acceptable and is prohibited as a way for behavior management of minors.
2. Appropriate affection is important for a child's development and is a positive part of Church life and ministry. There are forms of affection between Church personnel and minors that are regarded as appropriate examples for most Church sponsored and affiliated programs:
 - Side hugs
 - Shoulder to shoulder or "temple" hugs
 - Pats on the shoulder or back
 - "High-fives" and hand slapping
 - Verbal praise
 - Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of minors
 - Arms around shoulders
 - Holding hands while walking with small children
 - Sitting beside a small child
 - Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
 - Holding hands during prayer
 - Pats on the head when culturally appropriate (example: this gesture typically should be avoided in some Asian communities).
3. Some forms of physical affection have been used by adults to initiate inappropriate contact with minors. In an effort to provide the safest possible environment for minors, the following examples of affection are not to be used in Church sponsored and affiliated programs. This list is intended to be illustrative but not exhaustive.
 - Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
 - Kisses on the mouth
 - Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas
 - Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, staff-only areas, or other private rooms
 - Touching knees, thighs or legs of minors
 - Wrestling with minors
 - Piggyback rides
 - Any type of massage given by minor to adult

- Any form of unwanted affection
 - Compliments that relate to physique or body development
4. No alcohol, tobacco or profanity are to be used at youth activities. Sacramental wine used during celebration of Mass is not, of course, a violation of this policy.
 5. The introduction of sexually explicit or pornographic topics, vocabulary, music, recordings, films, games, web sites, computer software, or entertainment is strictly forbidden.
 6. Regarding Pastoral (or other) Counseling and Spiritual Directors, the person should not step beyond his/her competence and may not engage in any sexual intimacies with the person counseled or member of his/her family. The person is to observe chastity consistent with his/her station in life. All sessions should occur at appropriate times and places and may not occur in private living quarters. All information should be considered as confidential and not disclosed unless there is a potential serious threat to the health or safety of the minor or another person. (A potential serious threat would include but not be limited to information that a minor is pregnant, is being sexually or physical abused, is being threatened or stalked, is contemplating suicide or injuring another person, etc.) In such event sufficient information is to be promptly disclosed to the parents and/or law enforcement authorities so as to hopefully reduce or eliminate the threat to health and safety. With regard to information that the child is being abused, the matter shall be reported to the authorities as provided by law and to the Diocese as provided under the "Policy of the Diocese of Biloxi Regarding Complaints of Abuse of Minors." Note: Under no circumstances whatsoever can there be any disclosure-even indirect disclosure-of information received through the confessional.
 7. Harassment, whether based upon race, ethnicity, sex, physical appearance or otherwise is not consistent with Christian principles and Church teachings. Each person is made in the image of God and deserving of respect and dignity. No one shall engage in any form of harassment. Any complaint which alleges any form of harassment shall be promptly reported to the appropriate pastor, principal or office director.
 8. In general, it is not appropriate for a minor to visit the home of an adult. There may be times when this may be appropriate such as when a group youth activity is scheduled at someone's home. However, minors are not to be present at an adult's home without other adult chaperones being present.



Most Reverend Louis F. Kihneman, III
Bishop of Biloxi

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