

Ministerial Standards for Clergy and Religious when Dealing with Children and/or Vulnerable Individuals

Dos

Do know that pedophiles among Catholic clergy and Religious are very much a small minority, but that a small number have put you in a very stressful situation regarding your relationships with children and/or vulnerable individuals.

Do know that it is not your fault. You are also a secondary victim of the pedophiles who have abused our children and/or vulnerable individuals.

Do know that you are right to feel uneasy and uncomfortable because of it.

Do know that you have a responsibility to protect yourself because the public often views you with caution. This is a side effect of the secondary abuse that you are experiencing as a result of pedophiles.

Do learn and comply with the Child Abuse Reporting Procedures under both the *Archdiocesan Policy* and Georgia law. Have these policies easily accessible in your office.

Do know and comply with the Behavioral Guidelines, Guidelines for the Supervision of Minors, and Guidelines Specific to Clergy contained in the *Archdiocesan Code of Conduct*. Have these policies easily accessible in your office.

Behavioral Guidelines, Which Should be Observed to Protect You and Those to Whom You Minister

Do love the children and vulnerable individuals with a carefully disciplined love.

Do make sure that any physical contact with a child and/or vulnerable individual is done in a manner that is beyond reproach and is in a very public place.

Do treat every “child” (defined under the *Archdiocesan Policy* and Georgia law as a person “under 18 years of age”) and vulnerable individual with the dignity he or she deserves by virtue of his or her creation by God in His image and likeness.

Do avoid being alone with a child and/or vulnerable individual in a closed room unless he/she is a relative. Protect yourself by having the door open/or closing a “see-through,” glass-paneled door if the child and/or vulnerable individual insists on privacy with you.

Do have a parent or another adult around if the child and/or vulnerable does not need privacy and he/she is not a relative.

Do offer comfort and solace to those who are upset or grieving. Try not to do it by physically holding or hugging a child and/or vulnerable individual, if possible, unless he/she is a relative.

Do use only chaste language when speaking with a child and/or vulnerable individual (or any other person in the presence of a child and/or vulnerable individual).

Do dress modestly at all times, particularly when in the presence of a child and/or vulnerable individual.

From time to time you may find yourself unavoidably left with a child and/or vulnerable individual because of a parent or guardian's failure to arrive at your facility on time to pick up that child and/or vulnerable individual at the conclusion of an Archdiocesan-sponsored program. While this is always a difficult and frustrating situation, it must be understood by all concerned that the safety and welfare of that child and/or vulnerable individual under those circumstances continues to be the moral and legal obligation of you and those associated with your program on behalf of the Archdiocese. In view of the foregoing, the following guidelines are set forth to provide you with an overview of how such situations should generally be handled:

- Under no circumstances should any child and/or vulnerable individual be left unattended. That child and/or vulnerable individual remains your obligation until such time as a family member or other responsible adult takes physical custody of that child and/or vulnerable individual.
- All reasonable efforts should be undertaken to contact the parent or guardian or other responsible family member of the child and/or vulnerable individual to arrange for their pick up.
- In the event those efforts are successful but the adult appearing to pick up the child and/or vulnerable individual is neither the parent nor the designated emergency contact person according to current records, you must confirm the identity of the adult and their relationship to the child and/or vulnerable individual. Obviously, you must conclude through the use of sound judgment that the adult is an appropriate person to take custody of the child and/or vulnerable individual.
- In the event that all of these efforts are unsuccessful, you should call the local police authority and report the abandonment of the child and/or vulnerable individual and request the police to come to your facility to take custody of the child and/or vulnerable individual. The timing and decision to call local police authorities is to be based on your good judgment and professional assessment of the situation.
- You should not undertake to transport a child and/or vulnerable individual in your automobile to another location unless you have the written permission of the parent or legal guardian, there is a medical emergency or the child and/or vulnerable individual is a relative.
- In the event that a parent or guardian's failure to timely pick up a child and/or vulnerable individual is a repeated or consistent problem, this matter should be handled like any other disciplinary issue involving breach of program policies and procedures. This may result in the parents/guardians being directed to withdraw their child and/or vulnerable individual from the program.

Don'ts

Don't blame yourself for this Church crisis. It is not your fault. The pedophile is the cause of the crisis, not you.

Don't isolate or remove yourself from the children and/or vulnerable individuals. They need you. You are an important person in their growth and development in their relationship with God and the Church.

Don't ignore your own feelings about the way your life has been impacted by the media coverage of abuse of children in the Catholic Church. Make time for prayer and spiritual direction. Do what it takes to remain healthy and spiritually strong.

Behavioral Guidelines, Which Should be Observed to Protect You and Those to Whom You Minister

Do not physically or emotionally abuse any child and/or vulnerable individual, including, but not limited to, physically or emotionally punishing a child and/or vulnerable individual.

Do not sexually abuse or exploit any child and/or vulnerable individual, as that term is defined under Georgia law, section 1.5 of the *Archdiocesan Policy*, or canon 1395.2 of the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*.

Do not permit any child and/or vulnerable individual to enter your home or living quarters unless accompanied by their parent or guardian. If you are a priest and the child and/or vulnerable individual is a relative you must have permission from the Archbishop before allowing a minor to stay in your rectory.

Do not permit a child and/or vulnerable individual to have unsupervised access to any archdiocesan facilities or buildings.

Do not take an overnight trip alone with any child and/or vulnerable individual unless he/she is a relative.

Do not dress or undress yourself in the presence of a child and/or vulnerable individual or allow a child and/or vulnerable individual to dress or undress in your presence unless he/she is a relative.

Do not allow a child and/or vulnerable individual to sleep in the same room with you unless he/she is a relative.

Do not provide any child and/or vulnerable individual with alcohol, tobacco, legal or illegal prescription or non-prescription drugs unless he/she is a relative.

Do not accompany a child and/or vulnerable individual, who is not accompanied by a parent or guardian, to any place that serves alcohol unless he/she is a relative or you are the legal guardian.

Do not provide any child and/or vulnerable individual with pornography or permit a child and/or vulnerable individual to have pornography in his or her possession in your presence.

Do not pay for or otherwise accompany a child and/or vulnerable individual to watch any movie or video that does not have a PG -13 rating, unless he/she is a relative.

Do not use profanity or sexually expressive or vulgar language, but particularly when in the presence of a child and/or vulnerable individual.

Do not allow music to be played which contains profanity, sexually expressive or vulgar language.

Do not meet alone with a child and/or vulnerable individual for any reason, unless he/she is a relative, other than for the Sacrament of Penance, and then with the safeguards called for in the Archdiocesan liturgical guidelines.

Do not drive a child and/or vulnerable individual alone in your automobile unless he/she is a relative.

Do not allow a child and/or vulnerable individual to remain in the presence of only one other person, who is not the child's and/or vulnerable individual's parent or guardian, particularly a person who is not at least five years older than the child.

Do not meet with a child and/or vulnerable individual in a room without a window or without the door being open unless he/she is a relative.

Do not discuss your personal life with children and/or vulnerable individuals unless he/she is a relative.

Do not discuss the personal lives of fellow clergy, archdiocesan employees, or volunteers with children and/or vulnerable individuals.

Acknowledgment of Receipt

I hereby acknowledge that on _____ I received a copy of the Archdiocese of Atlanta's "Ministerial Standards for Clergy and Religious When Dealing with Children and Vulnerable Individuals" effective September 30, 2004. I have read the "Ministerial Standards" specific to this ministry and agree to conduct myself in conformity with the Standards as they may be amended in the future. I also understand that this acknowledgment form will be kept in my clergy file.

Name: _____

[please type or print]

Signed: _____

Parish/School/Organization: _____

Date: _____

Check one:

_____ Priest

_____ Deacon

_____ Woman Religious

_____ Brother