

Ministerial Standards When Dealing With Vulnerable Individuals

Dos

Do know that pedophiles who prey on vulnerable individuals are very much a tiny minority but that a small number have put you in a stressful situation regarding your relationships with vulnerable individuals.

Do know that it is not your fault. You are also a secondary victim of the pedophiles who have abused 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 Employees 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 vulnerable individuals to whom you minister with a carefully disciplined love.

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

Do treat every vulnerable individual (defined under the *archdiocesan policy* and Georgia law) 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 vulnerable individual in a closed room unless you are the vulnerable individual's parent or legal guardian. Protect yourself by having the door open/or closing a "see-through," glass-paneled door if the vulnerable individual insists on privacy with you.

Do offer comfort and solace to those who are upset or grieving. Try not to do it by physically holding or hugging a vulnerable individual, if possible, unless you are the parent and/or legal guardian.

Do realize that a vulnerable individual, who is unable to speak, can say “no” to physical affection and refrain from displays of affection through their body language.

Do use only chaste language when speaking.

Do dress modestly at all times.

Do always plan to provide adequate supervision before and after Archdiocesan functions. A ratio of one volunteer to every three vulnerable individuals is suggested during these planned activities. During study sessions and off-site activities, a ratio of one volunteer to every two vulnerable individuals is preferred.

From time to time you may find yourself unavoidably left with a vulnerable individual because of a parent or guardian’s failure to arrive at your facility on time to pick up that 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 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 vulnerable individual be left unattended. That vulnerable individual remains your obligation until such time as a family member or other responsible adult takes physical custody of that vulnerable individual.
- All reasonable efforts should be undertaken to contact the parent or guardian or other responsible family member of the vulnerable individual to arrange for their pick up.
- In the event those efforts are successful but the adult appearing to pick up the 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 vulnerable individual. Obviously, you must conclude through the use of sound judgment that the adult is an appropriate person to take custody of the 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 vulnerable individual and request the police to come to your facility to take custody of the 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 the 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 pick up in a timely manner a 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 parent/guardian being directed to withdraw their 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 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 child and/or vulnerable individuals 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 vulnerable individual, including, but not limited to, physically or emotionally punishing a vulnerable individual.

Do not sexually abuse or exploit any vulnerable individual as defined by *Archdiocesan Policy*.

Do not permit any vulnerable individual, unless you are their parent or legal guardian, to enter your home or living quarters unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. If a social event including a vulnerable individual is held at your home, have an adult who is not related to you, in attendance if possible, or at least three other responsible volunteers for each person with a disability assisting you with supervision during that event.

Do not sleep alone in the same room with a vulnerable individual, unless you are a relative.

Do not take an overnight trip alone with a vulnerable individual, unless you are a relative.

Do not use open bathroom facilities in the presence of a vulnerable individual, unless you are a relative.

Do not dress or undress yourself in the presence of a vulnerable individual, unless you are a relative.

Do not allow a vulnerable individual, unless you are a relative, to dress or undress in your presence.

Do not provide toileting assistance for a vulnerable individual unless you are a relative.

If a vulnerable individual regularly needs assistance in the bathroom, family members, a guardian, medical personnel, or official caregivers should provide this assistance. If a vulnerable individual needs emergency bathroom assistance, two responsible adults of the same gender as the vulnerable individual should assist. Plan for this assistance before the need arises.

Do not fail to make plans for dressing, toileting, transferring and bathing assistance needs well in advance of any weekend/overnight retreat or conference. If a family member, guardian, medical personnel, or official caregivers are not available, only previously trained staff and previously trained responsible adult volunteers should provide this function. If those persons are not available, the vulnerable individual should not attend.

Do not provide any vulnerable individual, unless you are their parent or legal guardian, with alcohol or tobacco.

Do not provide any vulnerable individual, unless you are their parent or legal guardian, with a drug of any kind.

Do not allow a vulnerable individual, unless you are their parent or legal guardian, to self-medicate in your presence.

Do not permit a vulnerable individual to have possession of a key to any Archdiocesan facility.

Do not allow a vulnerable individual unsupervised access to any Archdiocesan facility.

Do not permit a vulnerable individual to leave the Archdiocesan church or facility during a scheduled class, event or function without supervision.

Do not accompany a vulnerable individual, unless you are their parent or legal guardian, to any place that serves alcohol.

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

Do not take photos of vulnerable individuals without the consent of their parent or legal guardian.

Do not pay for or otherwise accompany vulnerable individuals, unless you are their parent or legal guardian, to watch any movie, video or television program unless it has a G or PG-13 rating.

Do not accompany a vulnerable individual to an amusement park or other recreational activity unless also accompanied by the vulnerable individual's family member, guardian or official caregiver or unless it is an official Church- or Disabilities Ministry-sponsored event.

Do not use profanity, sexually expressive or vulgar language in the presence of a vulnerable individual.

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

Do not meet alone with a vulnerable individual unless you are his/her parent or legal guardian.

Do not teach or counsel a vulnerable individual at your home unless you are his/her parent or legal guardian.

Do not allow a vulnerable individual to remain in the presence of only one other person who is not the vulnerable individual's family member, guardian, medical personnel, or official caregiver. Arrangements should be made in advance for another volunteer to monitor such situations.

Do not give or accept personal gifts, having any intrinsic value, to or from a vulnerable individual unless you are their parent or legal guardian.

Do not discuss your personal life with a vulnerable individual unless you are their parent or legal guardian.

Do not discuss the personal lives of clergy, employees, staff or volunteers with a vulnerable individual.

Do not have any physical contact while dancing with a vulnerable individual unless you are a relative.

Do not accept a baby-sitting or house-sitting assignment for any vulnerable individual served by this ministry.

Do not visit vulnerable individuals at their homes without the permission of the parent and/or legal guardian.

Do not permit undocumented volunteers (no Social Security number, known background check, and/or no evidence of safe environment training, and/or no code of conduct signature) to assist you with the care of vulnerable individuals.

Do not date any vulnerable individual served by this ministry.



Acknowledgment of Receipt

(Ministerial Standards when Dealing with Vulnerable Individuals)

I hereby acknowledge that on _____ I received a copy of the Archdiocese of Atlanta's "**Ministerial Standards When Dealing with Vulnerable Individuals**" effective June, 2009. I have read the "Ministerial Standards" 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 personnel/volunteer file.

Name: _____
[Please type or print]

Signed: _____

Parish/School/Organization: _____

Date: _____

Check one:

____ Priest

____ Deacon

____ Deacon in Formation

____ Religious

____ Seminarian

____ Employee

____ Independent Contractor

____ Volunteer