

Code of Conduct with Minors

The following code of conduct, adopted by the Voluntas Dei Institute, USA, is an absolute and essential tool for its members 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 “Members of the Institute” is to be understood as including all priests, deacons, celibate lay members and all married couples in the Institute.

1. Those working with minors shall have trained at an appropriate level of their responsibility.
2. Appropriate contact between Institute members and minors can contribute to a minor’s development and is a positive part of Church and ministry.
3. Inappropriate contact between Institute members and minors will cause harm to a minor’s development and well-being, and should never occur. Sexualized touch is never appropriate. Any contact that is “secret” is not appropriate.
4. Those who work with minors must be aware that any physical contact with a minor might be misconstrued. They must be aware that the minor’s reaction cannot be anticipated and places the member and the Institute in jeopardy.
5. Institute members who work with minors should seek and receive Institute 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 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 emergency need.
8. Institute members 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. Institute members shall never provide minors with alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco products, pornography or other inappropriate material.
10. Institute members shall never physically discipline minors.

11. Designated living quarters of priest members of the Institute 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 District Director.
12. It is inappropriate for an adult to share a bed or a tent with a minor. Sharing a bedroom, other than a large group dormitory style room, should always be avoided. Exceptions may be made for a parent or guardian who requests to room with his or her child.
13. It is not appropriate for members of the Institute to date or give the 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 members of the Institute to give to or accept from minors or their parents or guardians expensive gifts. Any exceptions must be granted through the District Director.
15. Information provided on permission forms should be viewed or disclosed by members of the Institute only on a “need to know basis” or with permission.
16. Members of the Institute who observe contact or interaction with minors that appears to them to be inappropriate to the situation at the time should report it immediately to the Institute Coordinator and/ or to the District Director. When there is reason to believe that inappropriate contact, interaction or abuse has occurred, the observer must also make a report to the appropriate social services agency or the police.

I understand that any serious violation of this ‘*Code of Conduct with Minors*’ may result in the denial of the Institute’s endorsement for ministry, removal from ministry and/or dismissal from the Institute. As a member of the Institute, I promise to strictly follow the rules of this ‘*Code of Conduct with Minors*’ as a condition of my providing ministerial services to the local Church.

Member Name (Please Print): _____

Member Signature: _____ Date: _____

Address:

(Street)

(City)

(State)

Note: The previous cited ‘*Code of Conduct with Minors*’ is taken from the Voluntas Dei Institute, USA *Sexual Misconduct Policy Involving Children* and *Code of Conduct for Church Personnel*, pp. 13-15.