

The Catholic Archdiocese of Suva

Guidelines for Ministry to Minors

Any and all involvement with minors is to be approached from the premise that minors should always be viewed – whether in a social or ministerial situation – as restricted individuals, that is, they are not independent. Wherever they are and whatever they do is to be with the explicit knowledge and consent of their parents or guardians. They are subject to specific civil laws in the Republic of Fiji, which may prohibit certain activities. They are not adults and are not permitted unfettered decisions.

Do's	Don'ts
<p>Ensure the presence or proximity of another adult when you are in a meeting and/or pastoral counseling situations involving a minor, including Sacramental Reconciliation (seek an open yet private space). However, in those situations where the presence of another adult is not usual or practical (e.g. piano lessons, disciplinary meeting with an administrator, etc.) another adult should be informed that the meeting will be taking place. The meeting place should be accessible and visible with the door where the meeting is taking place left ajar unless there is a clear window built into the door.</p>	<p>Do not place yourself in a position where you will be alone with a minor in the rectory, parish residence, school, or in a closed room including a confessional. Hold confession in an open yet private space.</p>
<p>Minors age 16 and over are permitted to work in the rectory, parish residence, school or parish facility, when there would normally be at least two adults present, i.e. over 21 years of age. <i>Minors under age 16 may not be hired to work in any capacity for a parish, school or diocese.</i></p>	<p>Never allow an unaccompanied minor is allowed only in the professional section of the rectory or parish residence, never in the living quarters.</p>
<p>Keep the sacristy door unlocked whenever minors are present within the sacristy.</p>	<p>Avoid being the only adult in a bathroom, shower room locker room or other dressing areas whenever minors are using such facilities.</p>
	<p>One adult alone shall never engage in an overnight trip with a minor or minors.</p>
	<p>While on youth trips, the adults as well as the minors, may not use alcohol or controlled substances and anyone under the influence of these substances may not participate in the event.</p>
	<p>While on youth group trips, clergy or lay leaders are never to say alone overnight in the same motel/hotel room with a minor or minors.</p>

Do's

At the primary level (classes 1-8) at least two adults, one of whom is to be of the same gender as the participants, are to be present when a group of minors engages in organized games, sports or other activities. At the High School level (nine – twelve), one adult is sufficient.

At the primary level student groups trips of any kind must have a minimum of two adult chaperones, at least one of whom must be the same gender as the young people. (For larger groups a ratio of one adult to 10 students is recommended). At the High School level one adult chaperone or driver per group is sufficient. In all cases, drivers and chaperones must meet the compliance mandates of Live Scan fingerprinting clearance, Megan's Law screening, and current Safe Environment training (every three years). Under no circumstances may an adult transport a single (one) student unless the adult driver is a parent or relative of the minor.

Screen Audiovisual, music and print resources used in programs to ensure their appropriateness for the participants. It is not usually appropriate to use an "R" rated movie or movies rated with an even stronger designation. A clear, compelling, relevant reason must be determined prior to considering use of this media. Music lyrics should also be reviewed to ensure appropriateness.

Don'ts

Do not make comments of a sexual nature are not to be made to any minor except in response to a specific classroom or otherwise legitimate questions from a minor.

Topics or vocabulary such as profanity, cursing and vulgar humor which could not comfortably be used in the presence of parents/guardians or other adult, shall not be used in the presence of a minor/minors.

Adults are absolutely prohibited from serving or supplying alcohol, cigarettes, inappropriate reading material or controlled substances to minors. Alcoholic beverages shall not be served or consumed at parish or school social activities intended primarily for minors.

Never assume you can initiate physical contact with a minor. Careful boundaries concerning physical contact with a minor must be observed at all times and (beyond a handshake) should only occur under public circumstances. Prudent discretion and respect must be shown before touching another person in any way.

Note: Some adaptation in applying these guidelines when the minor is a relative ought to be the norm, but appearances in public nevertheless need to be maintained.

Violations of these standards as well as any sexual misconduct should be reported immediately to the appropriate parish, diocesan or civil authority.