

# Knights of Columbus Safe Environment : Best Practices

## REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE

1. REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT
2. NOTIFY LOCAL DIOCESE OF SUSPECTED ABUSE
3. NOTIFY KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS OF SUSPECTED ABUSE AT 1-844-563-2723

## GENERAL POLICIES

The term “vulnerable person” includes a person of any age or sex who is in a position of material or emotional need, sick, or physically or mentally disabled; this includes the elderly, children, and minors (under 18 years of age) and the emotionally vulnerable such as the widowed.

Programs, events, and activities in which minors and other vulnerable persons are present (e.g., Columbian Squires, Coats For Kids, Basketball Free Throw, Pancake Breakfasts, Fish Fries, etc.) sponsored by Knights of Columbus, require:

- the presence of at least two Key Leaders/Lead Volunteers who have successfully completed Knights of Columbus safe environment training within the last three years.
- at least one Key Leader/Lead Volunteer, typically the council’s Family Director or Community Director, who has been background checked and trained through the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program within the last three years must also be in attendance.

- Key Leaders, Lead Volunteers, and members:
  - when counseling a minor participant, should always be in the same room as others and/or visible to others.
  - should not give gifts to minors without approval from their Grand Knight, as well as permission of the parent(s).
  - should never supervise minors alone.
  - should always be aware of other adults present, at Knights of Columbus programs, events, and activities in which minors are present and they must be alert for signs of possible misconduct.
  - should notify their grand knight and/or call the Knights of Columbus at 1-844-563-2723 when they recognize a policy (“boundary”) violation or other possible misconduct that may impact the safety of minors and other vulnerable persons.
  - should always make all programs, events, and activities in which minors are present open to parents and guardians.
  - should NOT initiate, encourage or engage in one-on-one interactions with minors at or outside of authorized Knights of Columbus programs, events, and activities.

## POLICIES FOR MEMBER INTERACTIONS WITH MINORS

### APPROPRIATE

#### Physical Interactions

- Side Hugs
- Shoulder-to-shoulder hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- High-fives and hand slapping
- Touching hands, shoulders and arms
- Arms around shoulders

#### Verbal Interactions

- Verbal praise
- Positive reinforcement
- Appropriate jokes
- Encouragement
- Praise

### INAPPROPRIATE

#### Physical Interactions

- Full-frontal hugs
- Kisses
- Showing affection in isolated area
- Lap sitting
- Wrestling
- Piggyback rides
- Tickling
- Any type of massage given by or to a minor
- Any form of affection that is unwanted by the minor or staff or volunteer
- Compliments relating to physique or body development
- Touching bottom, chest or genital areas

#### Verbal Interactions

- Name-calling
- Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving minors in the personal problems or issues of staff and volunteers
- Secrets
- Cursing
- Off-color or sexual jokes
- Shaming
- Belittling
- Derogatory remarks
- Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate minors
- Derogatory remarks about the minors or his/her family

## POLICIES FOR TRAVEL AND OVERNIGHT PROGRAMS

- **OFF-SITE AND OVERNIGHT ACTIVITIES ARE STRONGLY DISCOURAGED.** However, any such event sponsored by the Knights of Columbus on an exceptional basis must be expressly pre-approved by a grand knight and the parents / guardian(s) of participating minors in writing, and must strictly adhere to the following in addition to all other Knights of Columbus safe environment policies and procedures. Key Leader, Lead Volunteers, and members should:
  - should ensure that all overnight programs, events, and activities are open to parents and guardians.
  - should not share a sleeping area with a minor.
  - should not enter rest room, dressing or sleeping facilities when in use by minors, except in cases of a dire safety or health concern.
  - should always protect their own privacy while showering, dressing, sleeping, and toileting.
  - should always respect minors’ privacy while showering, dressing, sleeping and toileting.
  - should enforce curfews with a room check conducted by two leaders/members/parents, both male and both female, as appropriate.
  - should not allow minors to have members of the opposite sex in their sleeping area at any time.



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## POLICIES FOR MONITORING RESTROOMS

- Key Leaders, Lead Volunteers, and members should:
  - be aware that most incidents of youth-to-youth abuse occur in restrooms, and they should conduct frequent restroom checks.
  - scan restrooms to ensure no other adults are present before allowing youths to enter.
  - allow only as many minors as there are restroom stalls to use the restroom at the same time.
  - avoid sending minors of different ages into restrooms at the same time.
  - remain within earshot of restrooms while in use by minors.
  - require minors to ask permission before using a single-stall restroom or restroom out of earshot of the group.
  - not use restrooms at the same time as minors.

## POLICIES FOR MONITORING FREE TIME

- Key Leaders, Lead Volunteers, and members should require minors to remain within their line of sight.
- At least two Key Leaders, Lead Volunteers, and members should always supervise minors.
- Key Leaders, Lead Volunteers, and members should conduct periodic check-ins and sweeps of the entire activity area.

## POLICIES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET

- Key Leaders, Lead Volunteers, and members should:
  - only communicate via email or home (not cell) phone with minors.
  - limit all communication with minors to Knights of Columbus related topics.
  - copy parents or guardians on all email and phone communications with minors.
  - never encourage minors to contact them via text message, instant messaging, or on any social media platform.
  - never send inappropriate, vulgar or pornographic images, texts or material to minors.

## POLICIES FOR PREVENTING YOUTH-TO-YOUTH ABUSE

- Key Leaders, Lead Volunteers, and members should:
  - always supervise minors in order to mitigate risk of youth-to-youth abuse.
  - not leave an older minor alone and in charge of younger minors.
  - strictly prohibit hazing inside or outside of Knights of Columbus programs, events, and activities.
  - strictly prohibit bullying, including but not limited to, derogatory name calling, singling out one minor for different treatment, ridicule or humiliation.
  - strictly prohibit games such as “Truth or Dare.”
  - consistently document and report all instances of bullying, hazing, inappropriate or sexualized behavior and suspected abuse between minors.

## POLICIES FOR OUTSIDE INTERACTIONS WITH MINORS

- Many cases of organizational abuse occur off-site and outside of regularly scheduled activities.
- This contact outside of regularly scheduled activities may put everyone at increased risk.
- **KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS STRONGLY DISCOURAGES LEADERS/MEMBERS FROM HAVING INTERACTIONS WITH MINORS OUTSIDE ITS PROGRAMS, EVENTS, AND ACTIVITIES.**
- However, if outside interactions with minors are unavoidable, Knights of Columbus has determined that the following forms of outside interactions are appropriate and inappropriate:

### Appropriate Outside Interactions

- Taking groups of minors on an outing with at least some parents present
- Attending sporting activities with groups of minors with at least some parents present
- Attending functions at a minor's home with at least some parents present

### Inappropriate Outside Interactions

- Taking one minor on an outing without the parent's written permission
- Visiting minors in a member's or a minor's home without presence of parents
- A lone minor spending the night with a member or members without parents

