

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., 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 of whom has also been background checked within the last three years. This is typically the Family Director or Community Director.
- members volunteering must remain vigilant at all times and be prepared to interrupt inappropriate behaviors and boundary violations should they occur; restrooms in particular must be closely monitored.
- consistently document and report all instances of bullying, hazing, inappropriate or sexualized behavior and suspected abuse among minors and vulnerable persons.

Key Leaders, Lead Volunteers, and members:

- should never supervise minors alone.
- should always be in the same room as others and/or visible to others when counseling a minor.
- should always be aware of other adults present at Knights of Columbus programs, events, and activities in which minors are present and must be alert for signs of possible misconduct and boundary violations.
- 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.
- should always make all programs, events, and activities in which minors are present open to parents and guardians.
- 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.
- must enforce the rule that service or provision of alcohol to minors, including beer and wine, and other intoxicating or mind-altering substances, is strictly prohibited.
- should not give gifts to minors without approval from their Grand Knight, as well as permission of the parent(s) or guardian(s).

INTERACTIONS WITH MINORS

APPROPRIATE

Physical Interactions	Verbal 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 praise • Positive reinforcement • Appropriate jokes • Encouragement • Praise

INAPPROPRIATE	
Physical Interactions	Verbal 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	• 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

MONITORING RESTROOMS

Key Leaders, Lead Volunteers, and members should:

- always supervise minors in order to mitigate risk of youth-to-youth abuse; be aware of the risk of vulnerable persons acting out against one another, e.g., interactions among special needs adults, minors, elderly, etc.
- be aware that most incidents of youth-to-youth abuse occur in restrooms, and they should conduct frequent restroom checks.
- identify location of all restrooms and maintain situational awareness of their use; periodically scan restroom areas and entrances.
- not use restrooms at the same time as minors.
- scan restrooms to ensure no adults are present before allowing minors 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.



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ONLINE ACTIVITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Key Leaders, Lead Volunteers, and members must:

- not contact minors (children under age 18) or allow them to contact you via text message, social media, or any form of private/direct messaging.
- inform parents or guardians in advance of how you will be communicating with their children and be told how to access those communications. Before contacting minors online, you must obtain written permission from their parents or guardians.
- provide access to and copy parents or guardians on all communications provided to their children. Members must not contact minors using platforms that do not give parents or guardians full access and visibility.
- limit all communication with minors to Knights of Columbus-related topics.
- never send inappropriate, vulgar, or sexually explicit images, text, or material.
- obtain permission from parents or guardians before using any pictures, video, or other information that may identify a minor by having the parents or guardians complete the [Minor \(Child\) Photo Release Form](#) contained in the [Public Relations and Publicity Guide](#) (#2235).
- disable geo-location “tagging” data that cameras or phones may automatically embed in digital images.

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; be aware of the risk of vulnerable persons acting out against one another, e.g., interactions among special needs adults, minors, elderly, etc.
- not leave an older minor or other vulnerable person alone and in charge of younger minors.
- 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.”
- strictly prohibit hazing inside or outside of Knights of Columbus programs, events, and activities.
- **consistently document and report all instances of bullying, hazing, inappropriate or sexualized behavior and suspected abuse among minors and other vulnerable persons.**

Appropriate Outside Interactions

- Taking groups of minors on an outing with at least some parents present and two safe environment trained members, at least one of whom is background checked.
- Attending sporting activities with groups of minors with at least some parents present and two safe environment trained members, at least one of whom is background checked.
- Attending functions at a minor’s home with at least some parents present and two safe environment trained members, at least one of whom is background checked.

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.

TRAVEL AND OVERNIGHT PROGRAMS

OFF-SITE AND OVERNIGHT ACTIVITIES ARE STRONGLY DISCOURAGED.

These types of activities may be excluded from coverage under council liability insurance policies. Councils should check with their insurance broker or agent about coverage before conducting such activities. Any such event sponsored by the Knights of Columbus on an exceptional basis must be expressly pre-approved by a grand knight and the parent/guardian(s) of participating minors in writing. Key Leader, Lead Volunteers, and members must strictly adhere to these additional safe environment policies:

- ensure that all overnight programs, events, and activities are open to parents and guardians.
- avoid sharing a sleeping area with a minor.
- avoid entering rest room, dressing or sleeping facilities when in use by minors, except in cases of a dire safety or health concern.
- always protect their own privacy while showering, dressing, sleeping, and toileting.
- always respect minors’ privacy while showering, dressing, sleeping and toileting.
- enforce curfews with a room check conducted by two leaders/members/parents, both male and both female, as appropriate.
- prohibit minors to have members of the opposite sex in their sleeping area at any time.

OUTSIDE INTERACTIONS WITH MINORS

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS STRONGLY DISCOURAGES KEY LEADERS, LEAD VOLUNTEERS, AND MEMBERS FROM HAVING INTERACTIONS WITH MINORS OUTSIDE ITS PROGRAMS, EVENTS, AND ACTIVITIES.

Many cases of organizational abuse occur off-site and outside of regularly scheduled activities, which increases risk. If unavoidable, Knights of Columbus has determined that the following forms of outside interactions are appropriate and inappropriate:

Inappropriate Outside Interactions

- Taking one minor on an outing alone
- 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

