

**Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
Youth Protection Manual
Supplement for Metropolis of Denver Youth Ministry Events**

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**Developed by the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries
of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
in conjunction with Praesidium Inc.**

1. Introduction

This publication has been created especially for staff/volunteers who work with children and youth at events of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Denver. Let us start out by saying “thank you” for taking the time out of your schedule to devote your special skills and talents to help our young people grow, develop and have fun at these events. **You have a unique opportunity to impact their lives, and with that opportunity comes great responsibility.** The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America has developed procedures that we must now all follow in order to keep our children and youth safe. These are contained in the Archdiocese Youth Protection Manual. This document serves as a supplement to the Youth Protection Manual and provides an overview of the policies and training that it contains. Here are a few definitions, just so we’re on the same page!

Event Coordinator:

The Event Coordinator for all Metropolis sponsored youth ministry events is the Metropolis Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries.

Advisors:

All adult persons, whether clergy or laity, and whether paid or volunteer, who participate in Metropolis sponsored youth ministry events.

Minor Participants:

A minor participant is a child or youth who is participating in a youth ministry event. Whenever we talk about a child, we mean anyone under the age of 12 years old. A youth is anyone who is at least 12, but not yet 18. A youth may also be someone who’s 18, but still in high school.

Types of Abuse:

1. *Physical abuse* is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child or youth.
2. *Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult* is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and an adult. This includes any activity, which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child or youth.
3. *Sexual abuse perpetrated by another child or youth* is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and another child or youth when there is no consent, when consent is not possible, or when one child or youth is in a position of authority over the other child or youth. This includes any activity that is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children or youth.
4. *Emotional abuse* is mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the child or youth’s growth, development or psychological functioning.
5. *Economic exploitation* is the deliberate misplacement, exploitation, or wrongful temporary or permanent use of a child or youth's belongings or money.

We want to be clear: we realize that relationships among people are at the foundation of Christian ministry and as such are central to the life of the church. Defining healthy and safe relationships through policies and codes of conduct is not meant, in any way, to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. Rather, it is to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices that allow the church to more fully demonstrate its love and compassion for children and youth in sincere and genuine relationships. We have developed the code of conduct in order to help the church create safe environments for children and youth and for those who minister to them (that’s you!) Please read this carefully, as you are expected to uphold it.

2. General Conduct

The following guidelines are intended to help you as an event advisor in monitoring and supervising behaviors and interactions with children and youth to help identify and stop those that may be inherently harmful to children or youth, that are the type used by child molesters to groom children, youth and their parents, or that may create the conditions where abuse can occur more easily. These guidelines should also be used to make decisions about interactions with children and youth involved in youth ministry events. They are not designed or intended to address interactions within families.

1. Make sure you abide by the event's ratio rule. For most events it's something like 1 advisor to every 6 or 7 minor participants. Check with the Event Coordinator to make sure.
2. At least two (2) advisors must supervise event activities at all times. This means that you should never be alone with a child or youth, or multiple children or youth, where other adults cannot easily observe you. (This shall not apply to the Sacrament of Confession with a priest, provided that all Confessions must take place in a visible location.)
3. In transportation situations, only one advisor may be in the vehicle, as long as at least two other people are in the vehicle. Parents or guardians of participants must complete written permission forms before you transport children and youth for event sponsored activities or for any purpose.
4. Any advisors under the age of 18 (i.e. Counselors in Training), must be directly supervised by advisors over the age of 21 at all times.
5. Be sure to abide by the event's rules to ensure the safety of children and youth using restrooms and showers or baths. If you're not sure, check with the Event Coordinator.
6. All advisors are prohibited from the use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs while participating in or assisting with youth ministry events or activities.
7. All advisors will respond to children and youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture or socio-economic status. Advisors will portray a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity. You must avoid even the appearance of favoritism.
8. Advisors are prohibited from attempting to form exclusive personal relationships with minor participants. You are prohibited from providing personal contact information to the participants. You are prohibited from providing a participant with your personal cell phone number, personal address, etc. Any contact outside the youth ministry event setting should continue to be both appropriate and professional and serve as a reflection of these policies. It is recommended that you maintain an electronic record of any private interactions between yourself and participants after the event is over.
9. Advisors are prohibited from having sexual contact with minor participants.
10. Advisors are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) during youth ministry events, on any Church property, or in the presence of minor participants except as expressly permitted as part of a pre-authorized educational program.
11. Advisors are prohibited from using the Internet to view or download any sexually oriented materials during youth ministry events, on Church property or in the presence of minor participants.
12. Advisors are prohibited from using the Internet or any online social networking site to inappropriately contact children and youth, during or after youth ministry events. Check with the Event Coordinator about a staff Social Networking Policy.
13. Advisors are prohibited from discussing their own sexual activities, including dreams and fantasies, or discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos or materials on or from the Internet, with minor participants. Appropriate discussions about your own abstinence can be held as long as another staff member is present. These discussions should be consistent and reflect the teachings of the Orthodox Church.
14. Advisors are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds or sleeping bags with minor participants (other than a parent with his/her own child). If advisors are sharing a room or tent with minor participants, parental consent of each minor in the room/tent shall be required. It is

acceptable to have multiple adults sleep with all the minor participants participating in one open space such as a church basement or camp lodge.

15. If the youth event is utilizing a hotel, or hotel style accommodations, the Metropolis of Denver instructs that each individual has their own separate bed. Parish organizers and individuals who choose to disregard this suggestion do so with the understanding that they can be creating a situation of risk and must accept liability for such. If an adult must be in the same room (they must be in separate bed or sleeping bag), ensure that there is parental consent and at least two campers with them.

16. Advisors are prohibited from dressing, undressing, bathing, or showering in the presence of minor participants.

17. Advisors are prohibited from using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of minor participants. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, demanding push-ups, making a camper stand for long periods of time, or any other physical force. Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or to a participant or others.

18. Advisors are prohibited from using inappropriate language, degrading punishment, or mechanical restraint such as rope or tape for behavior management.

19. Advisors are prohibited from participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities relating to youth ministry event activities.

It might seem like we are bombarding you with a lot of rules and regulations—most of them probably seem like common sense to you. However, they are important to read through so there is never any confusion about what is ok, and what isn't.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America is committed to providing each participant with a safe, nurturing environment that protects them from abuse and also protects Advisors from false allegations and the appearance of misconduct. When creating safe boundaries for children and youth, it is important to establish what types of affection are appropriate and inappropriate; otherwise that decision is left to each individual.

3. Guidelines for Appropriate Affection

Let us be clear: **Christian love and affection are a crucial part of youth ministry experiences.** We don't want you to be scared to ever touch or show affection to youth participants. However, there are appropriate forms of affection, and some that are not appropriate. Here is a list to help you out.

Some POSITIVE and APPROPRIATE forms of affection include:

- Brief hugs.
- Pats on the shoulder or back.
- Handshakes.
- "High-fives" and hand slapping
- Verbal praise.
- Touching hands, shoulders and arms of children or youth.
- Arms around shoulders.
- Holding hands while walking with small children.
- Sitting beside small children.
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children.
- Holding hands during prayer.
- Kissing on both cheeks when culturally appropriate.

Some INAPPROPRIATE forms of affection include:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
- Kisses on the mouth.
- Holding children over four years old on the lap.
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers.
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms.
- Occupying a bed with a child or youth.
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth.
- Wrestling with children or youth.
- Tickling children or youth.
- Piggyback rides.
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult.
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth.
- Any form of unwanted affection.
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, "You sure are developing," or "You look really hot in those jeans."
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear whether or not it is covered by other clothing.
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth.
- Private meals with individual children or youth.

4. Reporting

This policy was developed to help prevent children and youth from being hurt. Unfortunately, sometimes, despite our best efforts at prevention, abuse does occur. If that ever happens, we need to be prepared.

- **Who has to report abuse?**

YOU DO!! As a youth ministry event advisor, you are an adult who is supervising a minor. Failure to report suspected abuse of children or youth is a crime. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. State laws provide immunity from civil liability for good faith reporting.

- **What do you have to report?**

You must report any signs of perceived physical, sexual or emotional abuse of minors and also any incidents that involve a minor abusing a minor. Remember, when in doubt, report!

- **Where do you report?**

You are responsible to report to the Event Coordinator or designated person in charge. They in turn, will contact the proper authorities (i.e. State Child Protection Agency or Department of Social Services.) It's a good idea to follow up with Event Coordinator to make sure that they have reported everything.

- **What if you see another advisor violating this policy?**

If you see any inappropriate behaviors that are inconsistent with the guidelines for appropriate affection, or which may violate any provision of the Youth Protection Manual, these are circumstances that prompt reports. Examples of inappropriate behaviors or policy violations would be seeking private time with children or youth, taking children or youth on over-night trips without other adults, swearing or making suggestive comments to children or youth, or selecting or using staff or volunteers without the required screening. **It might be hard to report a friend, but you must remember that the safety of the minor participants is your number one priority.**

- **How do you report advisor violations of the policy?**

Go to the Event Coordinator and tell him/her your concerns. If you don't feel comfortable talking to the Event Coordinator for whatever reason, talk to another designated person in charge at the event, or you can contact the Metropolis Chancellor's office. The Event Coordinator will fill out a "Notice of Concern" form and follow up with the advisor.

- **What should you do if a minor participant tells you they are being abused?**

Take what the participant says seriously! Immediately go to the Event Coordinator and explain the situation—remember—it's not your job to decide if the allegation is true, it's your job to report. The Event Coordinator will fill out a "Notice of Concern" form and report the incident to the proper state authorities. Remember that children VERY RARELY make false allegations. Follow up to make sure reports have been made to the proper authorities and that the "Notice of Concern" has been filed. If the minor participant states that someone at the youth ministry event is currently abusing them, do not confront the accused person until the safety of the participant is secured.

5. Working with the Abused

If a minor participant tells you that he/she has been abused:

- Take what the participant says seriously- let them know that you believe them.
- Don't make assumptions about what happened.
- Thank the participant for telling you and praise them courage for speaking out.
- Emphasize that what happened was not his or her fault and they did not deserve to be treated like that.
- Encourage the participant to talk but don't push for details or imply things. You don't want to put any ideas into their head. Ask questions like "What happened next?" and try to be a good listener.
- Avoid statements that can make the participant feel worse like "Why didn't you tell any one?" or "Maybe you misunderstood the person."
- Never promise a participant that you won't tell anyone. Explain that it's your responsibility to keep them safe, and part of this includes disclosing information to the Event Coordinator.

Remember, sometimes children can be afraid to report because the perpetrator has threatened them, or they are afraid that they'll be the ones who get in trouble. It's important that participants know that youth ministry events are a safe place full of people who want to help and protect them. Make sure you do your part by going to the Event Coordinator, following up to make sure that he or she has reported properly, and ensuring that the participant is safe. Taking the participant seriously, making the report to the Event Coordinator and allowing the qualified people to verify the accusation shows the abused child or youth that he/she is your first concern.

6. Contact Information

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