

The Prelature of Opus Dei in the United States Guidelines for Activities Involving Minors

These guidelines apply to all those who oversee and carry out activities of the Prelature in the United States in which minors take part. These activities include classes, retreats, and days of recollection offered by the Prelature. The guidelines also apply to one-on-one counseling of the minors who take part in these activities. A minor is anyone under the age of 18.

1. Whenever adults are with an individual minor, they should always remain within view of other people and should avoid being alone in any isolated place.
2. Priests should hear confessions and give spiritual direction to minors only in a confessional with a screen, in a room with a window in the door allowing them to be easily seen, or in a place where they are in the sight of other people (but out of earshot). In the case of women, priests should hear their confessions only in a confessional with a screen.
3. When laymen talk to minors alone they should do so in a room with the door open or with a window in the door allowing them to be easily seen, or some place where they can be easily seen by other people.
4. No adult should ever be alone with a minor in a bedroom. No minors should be in bedrooms of centers, and it is better if they simply do not enter the residents' area of the center.
5. Any overnight activities or one-day trips involving minors should include a sufficient proportion of adults and never fewer than two. In overnight activities, no adult should share a bedroom (or tent) with minors. If possible, minors should sleep either in single rooms or in rooms with three or more.
6. In overnight activities, the priest should have his own bedroom.
7. No adult should shower or dress in the presence of minors and vice-versa. Adults should have separate showers or use the showers at a separate time. Whenever the minors need to dress with other minors present, they should be instructed to use bathrobes or at least towels. All showers should be individual showers or have individual stalls.
8. No adult should drive in a car alone with a minor, unless the parents have given their explicit approval. Longer trips alone with a minor (over half an hour) should be avoided altogether.

9. Before a minor attends an overnight activity (e.g., a retreat) the parents should be informed and their approval obtained by those responsible for the activity.
10. No adult should invite or aid minors to smoke, drink alcohol, or use illegal drugs.
11. Adults should avoid any physical contact that is sexual or could be misunderstood as sexual. In this area it is better to err on the side of caution. Wrestling and roughhousing should be avoided.
12. No adult should give or show to a minor pornographic or indecent reading materials, photographs, CD's, DVD's, websites, etc. In speaking about matters related to the virtue of chastity, it is best to emphasize the positive aspects of the ascetical struggle.
13. If anyone knows or reasonably suspects that abuse of a minor has taken place, he should inform the director of the activity immediately. He should also inform the Prelature's Child Protection Coordinator. All those who work with minors should be familiar with the pertinent state's requirements for mandatory reporting of confirmed or suspected abuse of minors.
14. If a minor says that he has been abused, the adult should listen to him without disputing his story, ask for pertinent details (who, when, what), and tell him that he will speak to the Director. He should be encouraged to tell his parents.

I, _____, have read the above guidelines and agree to abide by them in all activities of the Prelature involving minors.

Signature

Date

Approved September 25, 2008