

*Guidelines for Adults Working  
with the Youth of Gesu Parish*

*Gesu Church  
2470 Miramar Boulevard  
University Hts., Ohio 44118  
(216) 932-0617*

## **Ministry to Minors:**

### **Guidelines for Adults who work with Youth**

The trust the children of our parish and their parents place at Gesu Church is not a trust taken lightly. Keeping our children safe is a vital goal, one that must be shared by all who work with the youth of our parish, seeking to bring them ever closer to the Lord.

The guidelines below will apply to adults who work regularly with the youth of our parish. The safety, health or welfare of a child is always the ultimate concern of the adult leader. Common sense should be used when implementing these policies.

The Pastor or his designee will review these policies on a yearly basis. Volunteers will be informed of the changes.

#### **I. DEFINITIONS**

- A. Supervisor or Gesu staff member:** An employee of Gesu Parish or School.
- B. Virtus training:** Sexual abuse awareness training approved by and presented under the auspices of the Diocese of Cleveland.
- C. Minor:** Any individual under 18 years of age.
- D. Volunteer:** Any individual who serves the Gesu parish community without pay.
- E. Providing ministry to youth:** Having direct contact with minors on a regular basis of more than 4 hours per month and/or more than once a month.
- F. Authorized adult:** An adult volunteer who is likely to have unsupervised contact with Gesu youth and has met all 5 of the requirements described in Section II and is approved by Gesu Parish to provide ministry to youth.

#### **II. Volunteer Qualifications**

A volunteer will be approved to provide ministry to Gesu youth when:

- A. A completed Volunteer Application has been reviewed and approved by the designated Gesu staff member.
- B. A reference check has been completed with no discovery of behavior related to sexual abuse of minors.
- C. Notification of Virtus training completion is received from the Diocese.
- D. Acknowledgement of receipt of the Diocesan and the Parish Policy documents is on file.

E. In addition, for volunteers who are likely to have **unsupervised contact** with youth, fingerprint-based criminal background check results must be on file and indicate no history of crimes involving children or moral turpitude.

Please note: an Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) background check will be run unless the volunteer has not been a resident of Ohio for at least the last 5 years, in which case an FBI background check is run. Occasional and periodic background checks subsequent to this initial check may be made at the discretion of the parish administration.

### **III. Requirements for volunteer leadership of activities involving minors**

A. A Gesu staff member or at least one (1) authorized adult (see Section II) must be present when an activity involving minors is conducted. Every effort should be made to have at least two (2) adults present at events involving minors, including but not limited to:

1. Scouting activities
2. Extracurricular competitions
3. Club meetings
4. Music practice
5. Classroom “pull out” sessions / tutoring
6. Youth group trips
7. Service projects
8. Sports practices and games (For sports teams, it is recommended that at least one adult present must be the same gender as the team being supervised.)

B. All meetings/activities involving minors must be held in settings that are observable and interruptible. An “Observable” location is a public place, a common area, or an open-doored room in which a passerby would have a clear view of the activity inside. “Interruptible” means that an observer must be able to spontaneously enter the meeting area.

C. Only Gesu staff members or authorized adults (see Section II) may act as adult leaders for meetings or activities involving minors at Gesu. Guest speakers must be cleared by proper administration and meet with the minors only in the presence of a staff member or authorized adult.

### **IV. Prohibited Conduct:**

A. No adult should be alone with a minor in any closed building or room.

B. No adult is permitted to take an overnight trip with a minor alone.

C. No minor should be alone in the personal living quarters of any adult leader.

- D. No minor should be sent on errands or left alone in a learning, sports, school or field trip environment.
- E. An adult leader may only transport a child with the permission of the child's parent.
- F. Adults supervising minors at a school- or parish-sponsored event may not possess, use, supply or serve alcohol or controlled substances to minors.
- G. Adults in contact with minors must not engage in or tolerate abusive, exploitive, or harassing behavior or language. Profanity, sexual references, teasing, destructive criticism, unwanted contact and physical intimidation are unacceptable. Instances of such harassment and the victim's response must be reported immediately to the appropriate supervisor according to the procedure outlined in Section VI of this policy.

**V. Special Considerations for Adults Involved in Ministry to Youth:**

- A. Relationships between adults in the presence of minors shall remain appropriate. Adults should not engage in flirtatious behavior in the presence of minors.
- B. Attractions between an adult and a minor need to be recognized, and great care taken, to avoid inappropriate behavior in any further interactions.
- C. Adult leaders must be aware of the power of their role or position and the minors' perception of that power.
- D. Care should be taken to avoid physical contact that could be construed as inappropriate.
- E. Discussion of issues related to sexuality should occur only in response to a specific question and not at the initiation of the adult leader. Responses should reflect proper respect for human sexuality and be in accordance with church doctrine.
- F. Requests by a minor to meet with an adult leader outside of the regular meeting time should be discouraged. If such a meeting is necessary, the meeting must be in a public place or some occupied area of our parish facility that is observable and interruptible. (See Section III) When possible, the presence of a parent or guardian should be requested. If a parent or guardian cannot be present, a member of the Gesu staff should be informed of the time, place and purpose of the meeting.

- G. Only Gesu Pastoral staff or a licensed professional should conduct counseling. If a minor discloses that s/he is being abused, the proper authorities must be contacted. Volunteers should contact the Pastor or other Gesu staff member in the event that a minor discloses abuse.

## **VI. Procedures for Policy Violations.**

- A. All adults who minister to children, whether paid staff or volunteer, are required to report a violation of this policy to the Pastor.
- B. The Pastor or his designee will investigate the allegation. Appropriate documentation of the allegation must be made in writing.
- C. If the allegation involves physical or sexual abuse, the Pastor will refer the matter to the Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services at the 24-hour Kids Hotline (216) 696-KIDS, or the local police department where the alleged incident of abuse is thought to have occurred, or through 911. Under Ohio Law, all sexual, physical, or emotional abuse must be reported to legal authorities.
- D. All other violations of policy will be reviewed by the Pastor to determine whether the volunteer may continue to minister to youth or requires further training.
- E. The parish business office will keep copies of all allegations and the action resulting from an investigation in a confidential file.

## **VII. Reporting Responsibility.**

All personnel of the Cleveland Diocese, parishes, and schools are obligated to report any instance of suspected abuse to the proper authorities. Knowledge or suspicion justifies reporting. Ohio Law protects the confidentiality of the report and reporting person.

All employees are mandated reporters for physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Yearly training will be given on signs of abuse.

**The Catholic Community of Gesu Church—August 2004**  
**Reviewed and approved by Diocesan Legal Office \_\_\_\_\_**

I have received and read the *Guidelines for Adults Working with Youth of Gesu Parish* and agree to uphold and follow all policies set forth therein.

Signed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (please print)