



teach • screen • protect

# youth protection manual

**Policies and Procedures for Event Staff**

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**Developed by the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries  
of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America**

# 1. Introduction

This publication has been created especially for youth workers serving at a Direct Archdiocesan District/Metropolis camp or event (hereafter referred to as event) of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. This information will serve as a supplement to the Youth Protection Manual policies, procedure, and training you will receive before an event.

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 in Christ. **You have a unique opportunity to impact their lives, and with that opportunity comes great responsibility.** Here are a few definitions, just so we’re on the same page!

## **Event Staff:**

All persons, including clergy, lay people, and both paid and unpaid staff, participating in an event of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

## **Young Person:**

A young person is a child or youth who is participating in an 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.** We have developed the following “General Conduct” policies in order to help a create safe environment for our young people. They are not meant, in any way, to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. **Please read this carefully, as you are expected to uphold it.**

## 2. General Conduct

The following guidelines will help you monitor, supervise, and make decisions about interactions with young people at an event. This will help you identify things that may be inherently harmful to young people, behaviors that might be used by child molesters to groom children, youth and their parents, or conditions where abuse can occur more easily. They are not designed or intended to address interactions within families.

1. Make sure you abide by your event's ratio rule. Usually, it's something like 1 staff member to every 6 or 7 young people. Check with your Event Director to make sure.
2. At least two (2) event staff must supervise 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 does not apply to the Sacrament of Confession with a priest, provided that confessions take place in a visible location.)
3. In transportation situations, one event staff may be in the vehicle as long as at least two other people are present. Parents or guardians must complete written permission forms before any young people are transported during an event, for any purpose.
4. Event staff under the age of 18 (i.e. Counselors-in-Training), must be directly supervised **at all times** by a staff member over the age of 21.
5. Be sure to abide by your event's rules to ensure the safety of young people while using bathrooms and showers. If you're not sure, check with your Event Director.
6. All event staff 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 event programs or activities.
7. **All event staff will respond to children and youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture or socioeconomic status.** Event staff 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. Event staff are prohibited from attempting to form exclusive personal relationships with young people. You are prohibited from providing personal contact information to the young people, such as your personal cell phone number, personal address, etc. Any contact outside the 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 young people after the event is over.
9. Event staff are prohibited from having sexual contact with a young person.
10. Event staff are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) during an event, on any Church property, or in the presence of young people, except as expressly permitted by a pre-authorized educational program.

11. Event staff are prohibited from using the Internet to view or download any sexually oriented materials during the event, on Church property or in the presence of young people.
12. Event staff are prohibited from using the Internet or any online social networking site to inappropriately contact children and youth, during or after an event. Please refer to **Section 4: Social Networking and Digital Communication Policies** for more information.
13. Event staff 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 young people. 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. Event staff are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds or sleeping bags with young people (other than a parent with his/her own child). If event staff are sharing a room or tent with young people, parental consent of each young person in the tent/room shall be required. It is acceptable to have event staff and young people all sleep in one open space such as a church basement or lodge.
15. If the event is utilizing a hotel, there must be one young person per bed (unless children are siblings). If event staff must be in the same room, there must be parental consent from each young person, at least two other young people in the room, and they must be in a separate bed/sleeping bag. All event staff and young person must only change in the bathroom.
16. Event staff are prohibited from dressing, undressing, bathing, or showering in the presence of young people.
17. Event staff are prohibited from using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of young people. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, demanding push-ups, making a young person 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 young person or others.
18. Event staff are prohibited from using inappropriate language, degrading punishment, or mechanical restraint such as rope or tape for behavior management.
19. Event staff are prohibited from participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities during or related to an event.

While it may seem like we are bombarding you with a lot of rules and regulations (most of them probably seem like common sense), it's important that there is never confusion about what is, and what isn't, appropriate behavior.

# 3. Guidelines for Appropriate Affection

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America is committed to providing each young person with a safe, nurturing environment. This not only protects young people from abuse, but also protects you, as event staff, from false allegations and the appearance of misconduct.

When creating safe boundaries between event staff and young people, it is important to establish what types of affection are appropriate and inappropriate. 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. Understanding Social Networking and Digital Communication

As a youth worker for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, you accept a great responsibility for nurturing the lives of young people, extending far beyond your interaction with them at a Direct Archdiocesan District/Metropolis camp or event (hereafter referred to as event). Young people will look to you as an example of Christian living, and may model many of their decisions based on what they see (or perceive) you doing, both on or offline. A youth worker will forever be recognized by young people, parents, clergy, and fellow staff members, as a representative of the Church. For this reason, you should carefully consider the content and nature of any type of communication with a young person.

For the purpose of this Social Networking and Digital Communication Policy, content is defined as photos, videos, messages, posts, or any other information shared through social networking sites. In addition, this policy applies to any and all forms of digital communication, including but not limited to email, instant messages, texts, MMS, video chat, etc. One must also consider that any content posted online or digital communication, without its proper and original context, could be misconstrued, ultimately damaging the participants of this event and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

For your own protection and the protection of young people, youth workers are strongly discouraged from any form of digital communication with a minor, including being “friends” on a social networking site. In order to facilitate continued mentoring and dialogue online, it is recommended that event administration create “official” social networking groups or fan pages. This allows for healthy communication with young people in an open forum, rather than private communication with a young person.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America requires that staff observe the following Social Networking and Digital Communication policies:

## **Friends and Connections**

Youth workers are prohibited from initially contacting or requesting “friends” under the age of 18. Because you are in a position of authority as a youth worker, a young person may feel obligated to “accept” your friend request.

If a young person requests your “friendship” on a social networking site, or if you are already “friends” with minors, you are strongly encouraged to set stringent “privacy settings” in order to maintain appropriate boundaries.

## **Appropriate Content and Behavior**

Any interactions with a young person through digital communication should be appropriate and professional and serve as a reflection of these policies.

Any inappropriate content on your profile/site or “tagged” to your profile/site must be removed. This applies to anything and everything on your profile/site, including both event and non-event content, i.e. personal photos, event orientation or break, etc. If another individual posts inappropriate content on your profile/site, you should immediately remove it and notify them to refrain from posting inappropriate content in the future. You should monitor your own profile/site regularly to make sure that you are reasonably aware, at all times, of its content.

Youth workers must not use blogs, personal pages or websites to disparage the event, its staff, employees, other individuals, or the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

Youth workers must not use social networking sites to share content prohibited by the event or Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America policies, and not consistent with an Orthodox Christian lifestyle. This includes the abuse of alcohol and drugs, sexual behavior, sexual harassment, bullying, or use of obscenities, profanity, or vulgar language.

## **Reporting Procedure**

If you receive any inappropriate digital communication or content from a young person, you must immediately notify your direct supervisor, i.e. Event Director, Metropolis Youth Director, Metropolis Chancellor, etc.

If a young person reveals abuse or inappropriate interactions of any kind with an adult, you must immediately notify your direct supervisor, i.e. Event Director, Metropolis Youth Director, Metropolis Chancellor, etc.

If you have additional questions about reporting procedures, please refer to the “Reporting” section of the Policies and Procedures for Event Staff.

Any youth worker found to be in violation of any portion of this policy will be subject to immediate disciplinary action, and may include the youth worker’s immediate dismissal from the staff and exclusion from future programs, events and activities at the discretion of your direct supervisor, i.e. Event Director, Metropolis Youth Director, Metropolis Chancellor, etc.

# 5. Reporting

Despite our best efforts at prevention, abuse does occur. If a young person discloses that they are or have been abused, we need to be prepared. Here are some tips:

- **Who has to report abuse?**  
YOU DO!! As event staff, 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 Director or designated person in charge. They in turn, will contact the proper authorities (i.e. State Child Protection Agency, Police, or Department of Social Services)
- **What if you see another staff member violating this policy?**  
If you see any inappropriate behaviors that are inconsistent with the guidelines for appropriate affection, or that may violate any provision of the Youth Protection Manual, these are circumstances that prompt reporting. Examples of inappropriate behaviors or policy violations might include seeking private time with children or youth, taking children or youth on over-night trips without other event staff, swearing or making suggestive comments to children or youth, or selecting or using event staff without the required screening. **It might be hard to report a friend, but your number one priority is the safety of your young people. Don't talk yourself out of it!**
- **How do you report staff member violations of the policy?**  
Go to the Event Director and tell him/her your concerns. The Event Director will fill out a "Notice of Concern" form and follow up with the event staff. If you don't feel comfortable talking to the Event Director, or if the Event Director is involved, talk to another designated person in charge. You can also contact your Metropolis Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries or your Metropolis Chancellor. It's a good idea to follow up with your Event Director to make sure that everything has been reported to the proper authorities and that the "Notice of Concern" has been filed.
- **What should you do if a young person tells you they are being abused?**  
Take what the young person says seriously! Immediately go to the Event Director 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 Director will fill out a "Notice of Concern" form and report the incident to the proper state authorities. Remember that young people 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.

## 6. Working with the Abused

If a young person tells you that he/she has been abused:

- Take what they say seriously--let them know that you believe them.
- Don't make assumptions about what happened.
- Thank the young person for telling you and praise them for their 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 young person 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 young person feel worse like "Why didn't you tell anyone?" or "Maybe you misunderstood the person."
- Never promise a young person 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 Director.

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 your young people know that the event is a safe place, full of people who want to help and protect them.

Make sure you do your part by going to the Event Director, following up to make sure that he or she has reported properly, and ensuring that the young person is safe. Taking the young person seriously, making the report to the Event Director, and allowing qualified people to verify the accusation, shows the abused young person that he or she is your first concern.

## 7. Contact Information

If you have any questions, feel free to contact your Metropolis Youth Director, Camp Director, or contact listed below.

### **National Department**

Christina Meares (*Youth Protection Coordinator*)  
Phone: (646) 519-6180  
Fax (646) 519-6191  
youthoffice@goarch.org

### **Ionian Village**

Fr. Evagoras Constantinides  
Phone: (212) 774-0267  
Fax: (212) 774-0251  
ionianvillage@goarch.org

### **Direct Archdiocesan District**

Fr. Evagoras Constantinides  
Phone: (212) 774-0267  
Fax: (212) 774-0251  
districtyouth@goarch.org

### **Metropolis of Atlanta**

Pres. Marilisse Mars  
Phone: (404) 634-9347  
Fax (404) 634-2471  
youth@atlmopolis.org

### **Metropolis of Boston**

Mike Sintros (*Camp Director*)  
Phone: (603) 746-4400  
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### **Metropolis of Chicago**

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### **Metropolis of Denver**

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