

MI Policies & Code of Conduct for Volunteers, Clergy & Personnel in Their Ministerial Relationship with Minors

MI Policy for Ministry with Minors requires:

- MI sponsored events must comply with the requirement of the Diocese when sponsoring events that include minors. The MI also has a Code of Conduct that has a greater standard which centers must comply with.
- All MI Youth events must first be approved by the MI Youth Local Coordinator [if one is assigned to your region] and the National MI Youth Office.
- The full participation of adult Leaders, Volunteers, Clergy, Personnel, and Staff in the Leadership Training of MI Policies & Code of Conduct.
- Certification of adult Leaders, Volunteers, Clergy, Personnel, and Staff in their diocesan child safety program; e.g.: Virtus, Praesidium or diocesan equivalent.
- National and statewide background check.
- If a reasonable belief of criminal sexual misconduct with a minor(s) has occurred, it must be reported to the proper authorities.
- All organized activities with minors (Whether or not they are official MI events, i.e.; extra-curricular, catechetical, youth ministry, retreats, camp, scouting, athletics, etc.) for which you are responsible, have been approved in advance by the appropriate administrator.
- Written parental permission before such activities. Parental Release Forms must include the type, locations, dates, and times of the activity, medical information and concerns, parental permission to consume prescription drugs and medications, emergency contact numbers, and alternate emergency contact numbers. Parental Release Forms must also clearly indicate that MI Youth leadership is not permitted to administer medication. [Please contact MI Youth National Office for a sample of an MI Youth Emergency Contact Slip]
- An adequate number of adults must be present at MI Youth events. [The ratio of 2 adult leaders for every 12 minors.] A minimum of two adults in supervisory roles must always be present during activities for minors.
- The release of young people only to parents or guardians, unless the parent or Guardian has provided written permission allowing release to another adult.

MI Code of Conduct for Ministry with Minors during an MI Youth Event:

As someone who ministers to young people, I will maintain a professional role and be mindful of the trust and power I possess as a minister to young people on an MI Event.

To achieve this, I will:

- Follow all of the directives of those in authority. I will inform Directors if I observe a team member violating MI Youth policy.
- Take my MI Leadership commitment seriously, by being prayerful, and remaining steeped in the Sacramental Life and daily renewing my Consecration to Mary.
- Keep MI Team unity a top priority and address misunderstandings or disagreements with my Directors or fellow Leaders outside the retreat context.
- Devote time and attention to the young people who will be placed in my charge.
- Use discretion when dealing with problematic situations.
- Be chaste in speech, action, and dress and never disclose information to minors about my personal dating/romantic experiences.
- Not engage in PDA – Public Displays of Affection.
- Not fraternize with fellow leaders, staff, or with minor participants.
- MI Youth Leaders are not permitted to administer prescription drugs or over the counter medication to minors in their care. Inform Directors of minors' possession of prescription medications. Directors are to insure Parental Release Forms indicate permission to consume such medications.
- Immediately alert the Directors of any knowledge or suspicion of potential harm that may be caused to any individual, including an individual's intent to inflict physical harm to himself. This includes bullying, possession of a weapon of any kind, suicidal thoughts or actions, personal cutting or burning, choking/suffocating games, illegal drug use or possession, abuse of over the counter or prescription drugs or steroids, and binge eating or purging or starvation.
- Report knowledge of physical, verbal, or sexual abuse of a minor to the Event Directors. Directors will follow reporting protocol.
- All MI Leaders, Priests, Cooks (MI retreat "staff") are prohibited from driving with minors who are non-siblings to and from the camp. Leaders and MI retreat staff may not bring teen siblings or family members with them during the leadership training portion of the program.
- Be advised that Minors must be released (sign-ed out) by the program to their parent or legal guardian. If a Leader plans to be the designated driver for teen siblings and/or family members, the parent(s) or legal guardian must give explicit written permission on their signed registration/liability release form.

- Be mindful not to offer counseling nor spiritual direction, deferring such matters to qualified personnel.
- Enforce MI Youth dress code with minor participants as well as abide by it as a leader in a professional manner fitting of the movement I represent. External labels or advertisements for clothing brands, including Abercrombie, Hollister, Pink/Victoria Secret, Aerie, or any other products that actively promote unchristian values or call to mind unchristian images are not permissible for leaders to wear while on retreat, nor is any article of clothing containing images or text that may be in conflict with Catholic morality or display content that is inappropriate in a retreat setting. Facial and tongue piercings must be plugged or removed during the retreat and tattoos must be covered. As leaders, we represent the international, Vatican-approved movement founded by Saint Maximilian Kolbe, and the dress code is meant to express the integrity and professionalism of that movement.

Girls:

No tank tops or sleeveless tops or dresses

Shorts must be mid-thigh [no more than 3 in. above the knee]

Skirts/skorts/dresses-hem must touch floor when kneeling (even when worn with leggings)

Modest one-piece swimsuits

No shorts for Mass

No low-rise pants/skirts/shorts (at no point should midriff or underwear show)

No skin tight or transparent clothing; no 'skinny pants'

No shorts, skirts, pants, or sweats with writing on the buttocks

No low-cut tops or dresses

No mid-drift tops

Guys:

No tank tops or sleeveless shirts

Shorts/swim trunks must be mid-thigh [no more than 3 in. above the knee]

No low-rider pants, shorts or jeans (at no point should midriff or underwear show)

No skin tight or transparent clothing; no 'skinny pants'

No shorts, pants, or sweats with writing on the buttocks

No shorts for Mass

No half-shirts

MI Code of Conduct with Minors ON or OFF MI Retreats or Events

As someone who ministers to young people, I will maintain a professional role on and off MI Retreats or Events, and be mindful of the trust and power I possess as a minister to young people.

To achieve this, I will:

- Never have a visitor who is a minor [non-family member] in a residence, rectory, sleeping facility, or any other closed room without another adult present.
- Never share a bed or sleeping bag with a minor.

- Never take an overnight trip or vacation alone with a minor [non-family member] without parents or other adults present.
- Never go on field trips or other outings involving minors [non-family members] in places where no other adults are present.
- Never travel with minors [non-family members] without another adult present at all times, in a car, bus, car pool or other means of transportation.
- Never take a minor or group of minors [non-family members] to a restaurant for a meal without another adult present.
- Never meet privately with minors [non-family members] in rooms, offices, or similar areas where there is no window or where the door cannot remain open. [If one-on-one pastoral care of a minor is needed (e.g., Sacrament of Reconciliation) avoid meeting in isolated locations.]
- Never introduce violent, sexually explicit or pornographic topics, images, vocabulary, music, recordings, films, games, web sites, computer software, or entertainment to a minor.
- Never flirt with or date a minor.
- Never touch a minor in a sexual way or other inappropriate manner.
- Never behave in such a way that could be interpreted or construed as an indicator of potential sexual misconduct with a minor.
- Never give expensive or inappropriate gifts to a minor [non-family member].
- Never provide drugs, alcohol, or tobacco to a minor. [This includes illegally providing alcohol to anyone under the age of 21] Prescriptions and over the counter medication must be included in the minor's parent release form for ingestion. MI Staff is not permitted to distribute or administer drugs.
- Never use, possess, nor be under the influence of illegal substances, including under age consumption of alcohol. [In the US it is illegal to consume alcohol under the age of 21].
- Never use alcohol when engaged in ministering to a minor.
- Never use obscenities, sexual innuendoes, put downs, or negative humor, directed toward or in front of a minor.
- Never engage in physical discipline for behavior management of minors.
- Never divulge extremely personal information to minors, such as personal testimonies that include a focus on suicide, past romantic relationships, abuse, etc... This creates a situation where young people are drawn to personalities, rather than to Christ, the Church, and to the community at large.
- Never engage in behavior including activities that involve excessive physical contact with minors. See examples below:

Conduct that May Be Permissible

Appropriate affection between Church personnel and minors constitutes a positive part of Church life and ministry. Nonetheless, any touching can be misunderstood and must be considered with great discretion. Depending on the circumstances, the following forms of affection are customarily (but not always) regarded as appropriate.

- Verbal praise
- Handshakes
- “High-fives” and hand slapping
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Short Side Hug
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Sitting beside small children
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
- Holding hands during group prayer
- Pats on the head

Conduct that is NOT Permissible

In order to maintain the safest possible environment for minors, the following are examples of affection that are not to be used by church volunteers toward minors:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses on the mouth
- Holding minors over four years old on the lap
- Touching buttocks, chests or genital areas
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms
- Touching knees or legs of minors
- Wrestling with minors
- Tickling minors [non-family member]
- Piggyback rides [non-family member]
- Any type of massage given by minor to adult [non-family member]
- Any type of massage given by adult to minor [non-family member]
- Any form of unwanted affection
- Compliments that relate to physique or body development

Conduct relating to technology, online communications and social networking

- Never give out to minors [non-family members] personal phone numbers, pager, fax number, or e-mail addresses, home address, nor engage with minors in Text Messaging, Photo Texting, Instant Messaging (AIM, AOL, ACQ, etc...), personal letter writing or phone calls.
- Never invite minors to view, post or blog on my [or that of another adult] online forum(s), including but not limited to personal web pages, public web pages, third party web pages,

web links, networking sites (MySpace, Friendster, Facebook, etc...), web blogs (Xanga, Livejournal, etc...) picture websites (Fotopages, etc...) chat rooms, profiles, etc...

- Never use the Internet in a way that may compromise my reputation as an MI Leader, the reputation of the MI Movement, or that of the Church. This includes but is not limited to images, statements, or innuendoes that depict alcohol or drug use, inappropriate gestures, indecent exposure, vulgar language, sexually explicit text or images, inappropriate songs or lyrics, or any content in disagreement with the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- I agree to allow MI Staff to monitor my social networking sites, blogs, video blogs, etc.
- Ensure that personal and business internet communication (i.e., Blogs/Social Networking) be professional, prudent and transparent
- Always set social networking accounts to "private"
- Always set social media options to "no tagging" and avoid captions with the address, location, or names (first, last, or nicknames) of minors
- Never post images or identifying information of minors from MI Youth events
- Never initiate nor accept a "Friend" request with a minor
- Never include photos of minors (non-family members) on personal social media pages
- Never engage in one-on-one instant message, video chat, texts, emails, tweets, calls, mail, etc.
- Avoid cause for public scandal (online or otherwise); i.e.; inappropriate behavior with alcohol, drugs, dress, language, relationships.
- Never use the official name, logo, or address of the Militia Immaculatae (MI) without expressed written permission from the MI National Center or— for what relates to MI Youth & Young Adults—written permission from the MI Youth National Office. The use of Militia Immaculatae, and MI Youth & Young Adults logos are for official business purposes of the Movement only. The logo shall not be placed on personal or non Militia Immaculatae related web sites, including personal websites, social networking internet sites such as My Space and Facebook. The Militia Immaculatae and MI Youth & Young Adults logos are not to be modified or altered in any way. Do not attempt to create or duplicate these logos. Militia Immaculatae and MI Youth & Young Adults reserve the right to have any logo or material removed that is not approved in writing by the MI National Office. Official names and abbreviations include: Militia Immaculatae, Militia of the Immaculata, Militia of the Immaculata Youth & Young Adults, MI, MI Youth, MI Youth and Young Adults.