

## **Aster Study Center Guidelines for Activities Involving Minors**

These guidelines apply to all staff and volunteers of Aster Study Center who oversee and carry out activities at Aster Study Center (or offsite) in which minors take part. The guidelines also apply to one-on-one counseling of 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.
3. When staff or volunteers 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 someplace 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 the center, 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. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. No adult should subject a minor to any physical or verbal abuse, including threatening, intimidating, taunting, humiliating and insulting, nor allow the participants to treat others in these ways.
10. No adult should invite or aid minors to smoke, drink alcohol, or use illegal drugs. The possession and use of marijuana are always prohibited, regardless of their legality.

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 rough-housing should be avoided.

12. Adults should not send text messages to minors under 15 and may send such messages to other minors only if they have first obtained the parents' approval.

13. 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.

14. If anyone knows or reasonably suspects that abuse of a minor has taken place in any of Aster Study Center's activities, they should inform the Director of Aster Study Center immediately. 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.

15. If a minor says that she has been abused, the adult should listen to her without disputing her story, ask for pertinent details (who, when, what), and tell her that she will speak to the Director. She should be encouraged to tell her parents.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the above guidelines and agree to abide by them in all activities of Aster Study Center involving minors.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date