

APPROPRIATE AFFECTION



This section is not required but the Episcopal insurance company suggested something similar in their policy boilerplate. Creating such a document should not be the work of a few people, but an opportunity for conversation. What in your congregation, your culture, your experience is appropriate affection? Every individual will have a different response. The discussion itself is actually more important than what is finally written on paper.

SAMPLES OF POLICY TEXT BELOW



Guidelines for Appropriate Affection

St. Sanctuary is committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment for our children's and youth ministries that protect our children and youth from abuse and our staff and volunteers from misunderstandings. Positive affection for those we serve is powerful in ministry, but what is actually positive and wanted affection is sometimes difficult to discern. The behaviors suggested below are helpful when determining appropriate boundaries, as well as identifying individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children or youth. These Guidelines are based, in large part, on avoiding behaviors often used by child molesters to groom children or youth and their parents for future abuse. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all staff and volunteers working around or with children or youth.

Some **positive** and **appropriate** forms of affection might be:

- 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

The following forms of affection are considered **inappropriate** with children and youth in ministry setting because many of them are uncomfortable for the

Adapted from Episcopal Church Pension insurance policy recommendations,

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recipient or are the behaviors that child molesters use to groom children or youth and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse.

- Pats on the head
- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses on the mouth
- Holding children over three 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 face, 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 certainly 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

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