

Practical Suggestions

These are some practical suggestions for identifying permissible and impermissible conduct.

Conduct that May Be Permissible

Appropriate affection between Church personnel and minors and vulnerable adults 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”
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Hugs (brief)
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Sitting beside small children
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs from small children
- Holding hands during prayer
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate

Conduct that is Not Permissible

Some forms of physical affection have been used by adults to initiate inappropriate contact with minors. In order to maintain the safest possible environment for minors and vulnerable adults, the following are examples of affection that are **NOT TO BE USED**:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses on the mouth

- Holding minors over four years old on the lap
- Touching buttocks, chest, legs or genital areas
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms
- Wrestling or tickling minors or vulnerable adults
- Piggyback rides
- Any type of massage given by minor to adult, or by adult to minor.
- Any form of unwanted affection
- Compliments that relate to physique or body development