

DOMINUS VOBISCUM

STAFF & VOLUNTEER PROTOCOL

All staff and volunteers are expected to abide by the general principles and norms outlined in the Newman Centre's *Code of Ethics and Regulations for Staff, Clergy, Students, Volunteers and Visitors*.^{*} In addition to these broad guidelines, the Staff and Volunteer protocol identifies specific DV rules for areas of interaction between staff, volunteers, and children.

The DV Staff and Volunteer Protocol provides the formal outline of key concerns that will be explored and explained in more accessible and age-appropriate terms as part of the basic training program for staff and volunteers.

Staff and volunteers have limited interaction with children and minors who are attending the Dominus Vobiscum Retreat Centre with their families. The main interaction for staff and volunteers is through the structured 2-hour "children's program" and "infant/toddler care" service in the morning.

The morning service program involves two types of activity:

- a) Infant / toddler care (children up to 3 years old)
- b) Children's program for children aged 4-12

All volunteers who assist the program staff as volunteers for the children's program or child-care are bound by the protocol. Teen volunteers (13-17) contributing to the children's program and child-care service have different profiles:

- a) Staff members
- b) Volunteers (including those from the attending or core families)
- c) Volunteers from Loyola's Christian Service Program.

For the rest of the day the primary responsibility for the care and affection of infants/toddlers and children rests with parents and their families. The child's experience of the retreat week should be centered around their parents, siblings, and their peers, not relationships with staff, counselors, or volunteers. While DV staff and DV volunteers are expected to be caring, respectful, and attentive in all their relationships, they are not responsible for meeting the needs of children for various forms of physical or emotional affection normally met in their family settings.

All staff and volunteers are expected to abide by the protocol. Cooperation is key. Work with one another collaboratively and share information.

BASIC SUPERVISION

During the children's program and infant/toddler care, staff and volunteers should never engage in activities that could be considered as neglectful, inattentive or inconsiderate. Cell phone use (texting, internet, , phone calls) is prohibited unless for emergencies or issues related to the program. Personal electronic devices (ipad, mp3 players, etc.) are also prohibited during the program hours. Staff and volunteers should not be under the influence of alcohol or any illegal substances and smoking is not permitted during the program.

It is important that the staff and volunteers be punctual and attentive to one's duties and tasks assigned in the children and the infant/toddlers programs.

BASIC SAFETY

Staff and volunteers must be alert for any potentially dangerous situations that may arise on or around the facility. Some examples of potentially dangerous situations are a loose power cord running across a walkway, a torn-carpet, broken glass, or a wet floor. If you see a potentially hazardous situation, point it out to a supervisor as soon as possible.

Any physical injury should be reported to the supervisor immediately (the supervisor will have a fully charged cell-phone available at all times, or access to a land line). The supervisor will keep a written record of any accident that has happened (e.g. fell off swing, hit head, scraped knee, not feeling well, etc.). The parents of each child will be informed of any physical incidents (accidents or other) or emotional issues (e.g. unusually withdrawn, anxious, or ill-tempered) at the end of each morning. The parents should get feedback about any problems with their children's physical and mental wellbeing while they are in the care of the staff.

I. PROTOCOLS FOR THE CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

All children (4-13) in the care of staff and volunteers must be treated with kindness and respect. Avoid showing favor to or special interest to one child more than others. Staff and volunteers should get to know all of the children. Staff and volunteers should not allow child's lack of courtesy or frustration to affect their manner. By remaining calm, staff and volunteers are able to handle situations more effectively and tactfully. Give every word thoughtful consideration. Defensive or confrontational words or postures must be avoided. If a situation becomes too difficult, call the staff supervisor in charge.

Communication:

When communicating with children it is important to:

- make eye contact with child;
- speak clearly and simply;
- talk at the child's level in words that they can understand;
- be a patient listener;
- smile and be respectful.
- Use positive reinforcement – let the children know when they are behaving appropriately and reinforce them with praise – such as: “Good Job”

Forms of verbal interaction deemed inappropriate include:

1. abusive language, yelling
2. swearing, cursing
3. dismissive or hurtful remarks
4. sexual comments
5. gestures that could be interpreted as vulgar or sexual
6. inappropriate expressions of anger
7. rude or insulting remarks

Physical Contact:

In order to ensure propriety, we require that staff and volunteers refrain from some forms of physical interaction that might be viewed as normal and healthy in familial situations, but are not deemed appropriate for DV staff and volunteer interactions with children. These restrictions apply to interactions between minors (teens) and children, as well as between adults and children.

Forms of physical contact deemed appropriate in staff/volunteer interactions with children include:

1. high fives
2. props
3. giving a helping hand to a child who has fallen ;
4. helping a child with particular tasks in the program where direct assistance is required;
5. if a child does explicitly ask for a hug, it can be offered respectfully; if the child is young, the staff or volunteer should kneel down to receive the hug;
6. forms of contact appropriate to specific games or sports.

Forms of physical contact deemed inappropriate for staff/volunteer interactions with children include:

1. any form of physical discipline (this does not include the use of modest force to physically restrain a child from a potential threat or risk situation).
2. kissing, tickling, caressing, or massaging
3. initiating a hug or embrace

4. having a child sit in one's lap
5. letting a child rest his or her head in one's lap
6. piggy-back rides, carrying children in one's arms or on one's shoulders
7. rough-housing, wrestling

Staff or volunteers should never be alone with any number of children in an area that is not visible to other staff, or where no other staff members are present.

If physical contact is necessary for an activity with a child (i.e. a drama, sports, a skit, etc.) ensure it takes place with the consent of the child and that the purpose is clear and there are other staff members in view. Staff and volunteers should be aware of how actions could be interpreted by children or parents. Actions that are done with good intentions can be seen as intrusive or intimidating.

II. PROTOCOLS FOR INFANT/TODDLER CARE

Infant/toddler care (ages 0-3) does require holding or carrying the infant, or sitting an infant in one's lap, if the child requires special attention or comfort. However, child-care staff and volunteers should not go off on their own with infants or toddlers, but always stay in visible contact with the child-care team. If an infant or toddler shows any signs of serious stress his or her parents should be contacted immediately.

Acceptable forms of interaction include:

1. holding an infant or toddler to comfort them
2. physically interactive games
3. assisting children who still need help with toilets (doors should be left ajar, but modesty preserved)
4. If there is no objection from parents, children 2 years old and older are encouraged to take care of their own toiletries.
5. restraining a child who may be posing a threat to himself/herself or others.
6. changing diapers or assisting in the cleaning of children who may have soiled themselves.

Examples of inappropriate forms of interaction would be:

1. taking the infant/toddler off alone
2. "kissing better" – the use of kissing to soothe a child or relieve stress
3. any use of force or physical discipline (this does not include the use of modest force to physically restrain a child from a potential threat or risk situation).
4. Touching private parts (this does not include procedures for changing diapers).

III. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF/VOLUNTEERS AND MINORS (TEENS)

The retreat week has a mission and purpose.

- Avoid pursuing of special or selective romantic relationships during the context of the week retreat.

- In order to ensure propriety, we also require that staff and volunteers refrain from forms of physical interaction between themselves that might be viewed as normal and healthy in familial situations, but are not deemed appropriate in staff and volunteer interactions with minors (13-17). These guidelines apply to contacts between minors as well as contacts between adults and minors.

Forms of physical contacts that would be deemed appropriate in staff/volunteer interactions with teens include:

1. high fives
2. props
3. collaborating in various tasks or activities (work, recreation, sports) in the program where physical assistance or contact is required
4. respectful hugs in appropriate social settings (church, community gatherings).

Forms of interaction deemed inappropriate for interactions with teens include various types of physical affection such as:

1. kissing,
2. having another teen sit in one's lap
3. letting another teen rest his or her head in one's lap
4. carrying another teen in one's arms or on one's shoulders
5. caressing or massaging another teen

IV. Social Media, Dress Code, Hygiene, Etc.

Staff and volunteers should not post any photos or information about children or families at DV on Facebook or other websites without proper permission.

A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However, staff and volunteers should wear clothing which:

- Is appropriate to their role
- Is not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing, or sexually provocative
- Does not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding

Examples of inappropriate dress:

- Clothing with racist, sexist or violent logos
- Bare navel
- Skintight leggings as 'pants'
- Visible cleavage
- Underwear exposed by low rise pants

Staff and volunteers should maintain proper personal hygiene.

V. PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES:

Given the importance of responsible care for children and infants, staff or volunteers who, for whatever reason, cannot or do not perform their duties adequately, will be asked by the children's program supervisor to step back from those duties or be reassigned to other duties until the situation improves. If performance issues are due to medical reasons, the staff or volunteer should inform their supervisor immediately.

Failures in the performance of duties can result in:

- a. The supervisor requiring an acknowledgement of the issue and commitment to rectify the situation;
- b. Notification of parents or guardians of the situation;
- c. Temporary or permanent reassignment to another activity;
- d. Serious and/or irresolvable infractions could result in suspension from the DV retreat centre.

The examples of appropriate or inappropriate forms of communication or conduct listed above are not comprehensive or exhaustive. If there is any confusion or uncertainty about particular types of interaction, err on the side of caution. In such cases of confusion or uncertainty, the staff or volunteers should consult and take direction from the staff person in charge of the children's program.

* Newman Association of Montreal, *Code of Ethics and Regulations for Staff, Clergy, Students, Volunteers and Visitors* <https://newmancentre.org/code-of-ethics-and-regulations/>