

Physical Contact – Appendix 354H

Physical Contact

It is essential to be aware of one's behavior, language and physical contact when working with children, youth and vulnerable persons:

- Show similar levels of kindness to all avoiding favoritism.
- Do not engage in or allow the telling of sexual jokes or behave in a way that promotes the sexual exploitation of others.
- Provide clearly stated consequences for inappropriate behavior.
- Stop inappropriate behavior early. Be fair, consistent and reasonable, matching consequences to the age and ability of the child, youth or vulnerable person.
- Do not use corporal punishment such as hitting, pinching, slapping, spanking or strapping.

Appropriate and Inappropriate Touching

A touch can convey a multitude of positive messages and communicate care, comfort and love; however, it is important to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate touching. It is also very important to be aware of, and sensitive to, differences in interpretation to touching based on sex, culture or personal experience.

Some examples of **appropriate touch**:

- Holding or rocking an infant who is crying
- Affirming a participant with a pat on the hand, shoulder, or back
- Bending down to the child's eye level and placing a hand gently on the child's hand or forearm
- Putting your arm around the shoulder of a person who needs comfort
- Taking a child's hand and leading him / her to an activity
- Holding hands for safety when changing locations
- Shaking a person's hand in greeting
- Holding a child gently by the hand or shoulder to keep his / her attention as you redirect behavior
- Providing a wet, warm cloth

Some examples of **inappropriate touch**:

- Kissing a child, youth or vulnerable person or coaxing them into kissing you
- Cuddling
- Tickling
- Piggy-back rides
- Having others sit on your lap (except for babies / young toddlers)
- Touching anyone in any area normally covered by a bathing suit (except changing an infant's diapers)
- Hand holding, except for the examples listed above
- Stroking a child, youth or vulnerable person's hair
- Hugging, where an adult knows or ought to have known that hugging is inappropriate

Source: Ecclesiastical Insurance Office PLC Nov 2009