



POLICY TITLE:	Professional Boundaries Policy
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A. OVERVIEW

- 1. Description and Purpose** – the purpose of this policy is to describe professional boundaries City of Saint Paul (City) employees must follow when working with minors.
- 2. Applicability** – This policy applies to all to all City employees.
- 3. Failure to Comply** – Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action in accordance with this Policy and any and all disciplinary policies of the City.

B. POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. City of Saint Paul (City) employees are professionally and ethically obligated to maintain professional boundaries with minors when working in professional role.
2. The City and its employees must pay attention to boundary invasions and unprofessionalism because inappropriate boundary invasions by employees can morph into sexual grooming of minors. If there is no legitimate health, safety, or educational reason for such boundary invasions, such boundary invasions are unwise and prohibited. Curtailing inappropriate boundary invasions reduces the opportunity for sexual grooming.
- 3. Inappropriate Boundary Invasion Examples**
 - a. Examples of possible inappropriate boundary invasions by employees include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. Taking an undue interest in a particular minor:
 - 1) Having a “special friend or a “special relationship” with a particular minor.
 - 2) Favoring certain minor by giving them special privileges.
 - 3) Engaging in peer-like behavior with minor including rough-housing.
 - ii. Using poor judgment in relation to a particular minor:
 - 1) Allowing a particular minor to get away with inappropriate behavior.
 - 2) Being alone with the minor behind closed doors where it makes the minor feel uncomfortable.
 - 3) Giving gifts or money to the minor.
 - 4) Being overly “touchy” with certain minors.

- 5) Touching minors for no reason related to the employee's professional role with the minor.
- 6) Frequent electronic communication or phone contacts with a particular minor.

iii. Becoming involved in the minor's private life:

- 1) Talking to the minor about the employee's personal problems.
- 2) Talking to the minor about the minor's personal problems to the extent that the adult becomes a confidant of the minor when it is not the adult's job role to do so.
- 3) Initiating or extending contact with minors beyond the work day in a private or non-group setting.
- 4) Taking a particular minor on personal outings, away from protective adults.
- 5) Using email, text-messaging, instant messaging, or social networking to discuss personal topics or interests with minors.

iv. Not respecting normal boundaries:

- 1) Invading the minor's physical privacy.
- 2) Inviting minors to the employee's home with no other adults or minors present.
- 3) Visiting the minor's home when their parent or legal guardian is not present.
- 4) Asking the minor to keep certain things secret from his/her parents.

v. Sexually related conduct:

- 1) Engaging in sex talk with minors (sexual innuendo, sexual banter, or sexual jokes).
- 2) Talking with a minor about sexual topics that are not related reason related to the employee's professional role with the minor. Showing pornography to the minor.
- 3) Hugging, kissing, or other affectionate physical contact with a minor.

4. Reporting Violations and Follow Up

a. Reporting

- i.** Employees must promptly report to the Department of Public Safety of any employee suspected of engaging in inappropriate boundary invasions they become aware. The reporting employee shall not inform the employee or volunteer suspected of engaging in appropriate boundary invasions that a report has been made.
- ii.** Minors and their parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to notify the Department of Public Safety if they believe an employee may be engaging in conduct that violates this policy or procedure.

b. Follow Up

- i. The law enforcement officer to whom a boundary invasion concern is initially reported must document the concern and promptly provide a copy of that documentation to the City Manager or his designee or the Mayor if the City Manager is the one the report is being filed for. The City Manager or his designee or the Mayor shall see to it that:
 - 1) The alleged conduct is investigated,
 - 2) Any minors involved are protected,
 - 3) Parents are informed,
 - 4) Where appropriate Office of Children's Services (OCS) are contacted,
 - 5) Where appropriate, remedial and/or disciplinary action is taken.

5. Reporting Sexual Abuse

- a. A.S. 47.17.020 requires that persons who are mandatory reporters who, in the performance of their occupational duties have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has suffered harm as a result of child abuse or neglect, shall immediately report the harm to OCS or to a peace officer if OCS cannot be reached and immediate action is necessary for the well-being of the child. If there is reasonable cause to suspect sexual abuse, a report must be promptly made to OCS. Any situation where a City employee is believed to have engaged in sexual abuse of a minor should also be reported to law enforcement.

6. Training

- a. City employees will receive training on professional boundaries, inappropriate boundary invasions, and the relationship of inappropriate boundary invasions to sexual grooming. Such training shall take place at least every three years.
- b. All new employees and volunteers will receive such training within three months of employment or service.

C. FORM(S)

1. None.

D. REFERENCE(S)

1. None.

E. DEFINITION(S)

1. "Minor" means a person who is not yet old enough to have the rights of an adult. A minor usually refers to a person under the age of 18, but can also refer to any person under the 'legal age' for certain activities.

F. POLICY HISTORY

1. This policy is a new policy.