

# A Sample Policy for the Use of Physical Touch

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The following five elements are suggested for inclusion in organizational policy regarding the use of healthy and nurturing touch in a caring environment. Such a policy can be helpful in providing guidance to adults who are providing care, protect children and support their developmental needs, and inform family members and other professional about the approach of a given organization. These suggestions should be individualized by the program, school, or organization to reflect their own beliefs and practice. Portions of this document were adapted from the Student Welfare Committee of St. Edward's Church of England (January 2016).

## SECTION A: POLICY PURPOSE AND SCOPE

*This policy explains our position on the use of healthy touch and provides basic guidance to meet developmental needs and protect adults and children.*

## SECTION B: VALUES STATEMENT

*Healthy touch is a basic human need. There are numerous physical and emotional benefits of healthy touch within the context of safe and caring relationships. Withholding positive touch can also have negative consequences for children and our community. We want to ensure that the needs of children are met and that they develop caring, positive relationships with others. For example, if a child initiates contact or needs reassurance, we want adults to feel confident that they can respond naturally without fear of unfounded accusations. We also want others (including family members and other professionals) to feel confident that we will respond appropriately to their children's needs, and to understand that positive touch may be a part of that response.*

## SECTION C: EXAMPLES OF ACCEPTABLE TOUCH

*Healthy touch includes physical contact in everyday tasks, greetings, encouragement and reassurance, nurturing, and protecting children. The following examples are not exhaustive and highlight situations where healthy touch is appropriate and encouraged:*

- *Greetings such as handshakes, fist bumps, and handshakes*
- *Assisting with hygiene and dressing*
- *First aid such as cleaning an injury or applying a bandage*
- *Support with tasks such as showing how to cook, perform a chore, or sports activity*
- *Responding to their initiated contact to return a hug or hold hands*
- *Providing a hand hold or hug to reassure a worried or upset child*
- *Offering praise through a pat on the shoulder or high five*
- *Ensuring safety by preventing the child from injury*

## SECTION D: TYPES OF TRAINING PROVIDED TO STAFF

*Adults in our program receive training on the developmental needs of children related to touch, the content of this policy, strategies to respond to feedback from children, and types of touch that are unacceptable (e.g. controlling, violent, or sexual contact).*

#### **SECTION E: PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING CONCERNS**

*The protection and safety of children through ethical practice is our priority. Anyone who has concerns about inappropriate touch from an adult or child should report their concern immediately to the program director who will deal with the report according to organizational ethics and policy.*

#### **SECTION F: CONNECTION TO OTHER POLICIES, DISTRIBUTION, AND PLANS FOR REVIEW**

*Related policies include (1) emergency physical intervention, (2) reporting of abuse and neglect, and (3) supervision and training. Please see respective policies for further information.*

*A copy of this policy is included in the organizational handbook and provided to family members and other professionals as part of the admissions process.*

*This policy will be reviewed annually and may be updated at any time as needed.*