

## Policy on Absolute Separation of Minors and Adult Content

TTO wishes to foster a family-friendly environment in which minors can play an important role in the spiritual lives of their families and learn and grow in the traditions of their parents.

TTO wishes to foster an environment in which adults can explore the limits of their spiritual lives, including sacred sexuality.

TTO recognizes that exploration of sacred sexuality among adults is *inherently exclusive* of the participation of minors and vice-versa.

TTO wishes to ensure a healthy environment for the children of its members and others by creating a policy of absolute separation between the participation or presence of minors and any adult content, where abuse not only *may* not, but *cannot* occur. There can be **zero tolerance of any kind for abuse**, or even the *appearance* that abuse might have been *possible*.

In regards to *appearance*, the TTO **does not wish to foster any situation in which an abuser might “hide in plain sight,”** therefore by eliminating any possibility of the appearance of a situation where abuse could take place we also eliminate any possibility of camouflage.

Additionally in regards to *appearance*, the TTO does not wish to be at the center of a new wave of “Satanic Cult” conspiracy prosecutions which could wreak havoc on the lives of members and their families. Therefore it is *vital* that these two elements be kept separate by a profound firewall which is one of the strongest and most central obligations of all members.

Therefore we present the following frank discussion of the separation of minors from adult content.

### Firewall Concept

#### *The Firewall Rules*

- A. Minors and adult content must never be present at the same time and place.
- B. Where they may be adjacent a *real, meaningful* and *functional* barrier must exist to ensure that minors do not, accidentally, come into contact with adult content.

Many people reading the statement above will have one of two reactions.

The first is **“why would minors ever be adjacent to adult content in the first place.”** The answer to that is simple. Many of our meeting places are private homes, and members with larger homes have children.

When a minor gets up because they want a drink of water and walk in on mommy and daddy in the rec-room, that's an unfortunate "oh shit" moment of suburban life. When mommy and daddy are engaged in worshipping Baphomet skyclad that ceases to be a joke from a sit-com and becomes the stuff of nightmarish legal prosecutions.

The second, from those who may have pursued alternative lifestyles is ***"what's the big deal. Kids are welcome at many family nudist camps. My kids are smart and know to keep away from age-inappropriate things. Why do we have to go overboard on 'separation'?"***

The big deal is that alternative lifestyle venues that allow children have rigid and restrictive sexual policies. We cannot, on one hand, say we approve of Dionysian revelry, and on the other say that we have a lax policy about having minors nearby then expect to be taken seriously when we say that we intend to protect minors from abuse.

### **What is adult content?**

We consider adult content to be anything that a conservative juror might consider to be "adult." Sexual behavior actual or pantomimed, bawdy jokes, burlesque, the demonstration of fetish implements or toys, display of pictures of sexual content, etc. If you need to ask, *it is probably adult content.*

In regards to media alone we acknowledge that parents may be able to make decisions on what is age appropriate or not harmful for older children, along the same lines that the MPAA allows parents a range of discretion in their PG, PG-13 and R ratings. This exception for *media alone* in no way should be seen as creating even the suggestion of any tolerance for behavior or contact which is prohibited by law.

While we *enthusiastically uphold* protecting children from abuse of any kind, we also realize this draconian approach, especially in regards to such mild elements as jokes, may be in some cases silly or even unhealthy, creating a tendency to overprotect minors from things which they have already heard from classmates, etc., or of which older minors are already well aware.

Please bear in mind we live and select juries in a society with unhealthy and restrictive social mores, and that the behavior of any one of us may reflect on the entire group, including individuals living and practicing in highly conservative areas. It is the case that what might not be problematic for a Local Body in New York could be highly problematic in Oklahoma City.

If we were an organization which condemned sex and promoted chastity we would not have to be so draconian. The fact is there is an assumption that people with "loose morals," e.g. those which do not conform to Judeo-Christian and Victorian ideals of monogamy and exclusively procreative sexuality are "dangerous," and inherently likely to engage in abuse.

This is wrong, jingoistic, and unpleasant, however it is a fact. We **do not want to create any situation which might cause the slightest actual danger to minors**, but we must also avoid giving even the **appearance** of any tolerance for, or the creation of any situation which, might possibly endanger minors.

We hope that by frank discussion our members will come to understand the value in adhering strongly to the **most rigorous** guidelines in this area. This is an area where we **must err** on the side of conservative behavior.

- We must, **absolutely**, safeguard minors
- We must *also* safeguard against even the *appearance* of impropriety of any sort.

## **Precepts**

TTO does not know the layout of your house or event venue. We don't know your friends. We cannot design a "one size fits all" policy for the separation of minors from adult content. What we can do is provide a set of guidelines and tests to ensure that you do not place yourself, any minors, or the legal standing of TTO in jeopardy.

These are also the standards that will be used to evaluate any complaints about your Local Body.

We cannot state too strongly that this is not an area for "letter of the law," or "loopholes." There is nothing that will get a Body's Charter revoked more quickly than any suggestion that this policy was not pursued **fully and zealously**. This is an area where we cannot take risks.

### ***Not having minors and adult content anywhere adjacent is the safest policy***

Where possible simply not having minors present anywhere remotely related to a site where you are conducting an event with adult content is the safest and best policy.

### ***What is a real, meaningful and functional firewall***

There needs to be a system, which can be reasonably trusted to insure that Minors do not approach an area where adult activities are taking place. This includes any situation in which they may have line of sight, even if it is quite distant.

In general we look at three criteria, **all of which must be present**

#### *Physical barriers*

There must be physical barriers which separate minors from any adult activity. This includes line of sight. e.g. putting the minors into a single cabin at a camping event, while a window and door faced an area where adult activity would take place, is unacceptable.

### *Indirect access or buffer zone*

Minors must not be able to leave an area where they are sleeping or conducting other activities, and move *directly* into an area where adult activity may be taking place. Stairways, elevators, distance and screening by foliage outdoors, are considered reasonable buffers.

### *Trusted adult supervision*

There must be a trustworthy adult who is available to supervise minors and if necessary get parents or guardians from event space, so that minors *do not ever need to go into an area where adult activities may be taking place* to find a responsible adult. The nature and intensity of supervision should be age-appropriate.

### ***Temporal Barriers***

Some events may feature family friendly activities during one part of the day, and adult events during another. For example, minors may be sent offsite, to a recreational or play area, or to bed, during a specific time.

If there are events with multiple components, the separation in time and location should be made abundantly clear to all adults present, so that there is no possibility of confusion.

- A substantial buffer of time should be present to allow for minors to be removed
- If possible a change of location should also be involved
- No adult activity of any kind should begin until the Local Body Master or their Acting Deputy has determined that all minors are offsite.
- In order to avoid any misunderstanding it should be made clear via general announcement that all minors are offsite.

Great care should be taken in this regard. "There was an afternoon family picnic, followed by a sex ritual involving Astarte," may be innocent enough if it is understood that all minors present at the picnic were put in cars and taken offsite after the picnic, long before the sex ritual occurred much later in the evening.

However if that same event is narrated as, "There was a picnic with children present and a sex ritual involving Astarte," the optics are considerably poorer. Any confusion among members as to when minors left the site, and when adult activities actually began, any blurring of lines or grey areas, could be an invitation to prosecution.

### ***Exposing minors to predation***

Another aspect of having minors present in proximity to adult activities is the idea that it might expose them to predators. That is to say that strangers, or untrustworthy agents might approach minors at an event, or in an area where they were being kept away from adults.

In practice this threat is both *real*, and *not limited to events that happen to have adult content*.

This makes the “trusted adult supervision” element of a firewall very important. Having a supervisory adult is designed not only to ensure that minors remain away from any adult events, but that adults who do not have any legitimate business with minors remain away from them.

Ensure your trusted adult is trustworthy, particularly if other individuals children are involved. This pertains not only to intentional predation, but also negligence.

We tend to be good and trusting people, however the fact is that most abuse is committed by family members or people closely tied to children. Ensure that any adult trusted with child care is someone you know well, and whose reputation is above reproach.

Remember that setting up a “shared child care” situation in which the supervisory adult is untrustworthy in addition to exposing minors to risk of abuse, could lead to lawsuits or even criminal prosecution.

### ***Testing Barriers***

The first question to ask when determining if your firewall is appropriate is “are any minors completely safe.”

Beyond that, some questions to ask are “how would this sound to an average person,” and “how would this sound in court to a prejudicial juror?”

There is no perfect test, but if your barriers are ever brought under scrutiny TTO will focus on whether or not they were given appropriate time and consideration, and being able to answer these questions is key to ensuring that they were.

### **Is nudity adult content?**

The honest answer is “no, but it is currently still forbidden in most contexts because of appearances.”

The human body is not sexual and regarding the nude human form as sexualized can be unhealthy. There is reasonable speculation that obsession about clothing can lead to unhealthy sexual development in which there is a tendency to see humans as “sexual objects,” in a negative way.

*The fact remains that to a conservative juror, nudity is assumed to be a precursor to orgiastic behavior, and we must act in a fashion that does not expose members to potential prosecution, or legal acts which could cause them to lose custody of their children.*

Bear in mind that the action of members in one group might adversely affect perceptions about members in another group.

### ***Where is nudity acceptable with minors present***

#### *At TTO events*

Only in a largely static, ritualized or ceremonial, context where there is no possibility of contact. e.g. the exposure of a nude human body on the altar, during the mass, is not forbidden.

Conditions:

- A custodial parent or guardian must be present, have had the nature and duration of nudity explained to them, and have given consent for their minor to attend the ceremony.
- All other adults present must be made aware of the approval given by the custodial parent or guardian, so that they do not leave with any misunderstandings about the situation.

#### *At Other Events*

Nudity is common at many Pagan events which allow family attendance. At Festival events by other organizations, where TTO Bodies or Groups may play a small role as presenters or hold formal or informal meetings, adherence to the general event policy on nudity is acceptable. It is assumed that these events have longstanding policies to prevent other behavior which would constitute a risk to minors.

#### *At TTO Festival Events*

The ability to go nude, freely, is something many individuals seek in festival events. Where the TTO is a major sponsor or anchor of a festival event, developing policies which allow for public nudity may be key to local attendance or the support of other pagan groups.

Allowing nudity at Festivals requires discussion with, and explicit written approval from, the Secretary General. In order to receive approval please allow at least sixty days, and be prepared to discuss your event on the phone. Factors which will be considered are:

- Other similar events in the area
- Family-friendly rather than adult content

### ***Is toplessness nudity?***

In general we feel that the idea that some humans can go topless while others cannot is offensive.

Our policy is that toplessness is not nudity, however we ***urge the most extreme caution in the implementation of this policy*** with due regards to circumstance, perception, local statute, and

any possibility that the manner of presentation could lead authorities or bystanders to believe such action involved exposing minors to sexualized content.

### ***Educational Exception***

Many churches offer some form of sexual education to youth. As TTO develops its educational programs, sex education may be an appropriate area for some bodies.

Age-appropriate discussion of sexual topics with minors in the context of formal sexual education is not considered “adult content” when it is presented by a legitimate and credentialed educator, using a specifically designed and regular curriculum, with the supervision of other responsible adults and the explicit prior or contemporaneous written permission of the custodial parent(s) or legal guardian(s).

Curriculum and practices should conform to Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) standards or guidelines.

Curriculum and the background and credentials of the educator must be available to parents for inspection.

### ***Health and STD Counseling***

Clergy may often be called on to fulfill the role of family or youth counselor. The presentation of information and counseling regarding sexual health, OB-GYN visits, sexually transmitted diseases, and options regarding birth control and pregnancy in the course of providing guidance to youth members does not fall under the definition of “adult content.” In this case, guidance prepared by TTO, or materials provided by reputable organizations focusing on evidence-based science should be used. This may include guidance from Planned Parenthood, The Centers for Disease Control, and other similar reputable authorities.