

Safe Touch

Touch can be healing and reassuring. However, it is important to touch in a manner which respects the person. Physical contact with children and adults with disabilities should be developmentally appropriate. Remember that teens and adults with disabilities are not asexual. Many of them have desires for marriage and romantic relationships. Conduct yourself in a way that conveys friendship, but nothing more.

1. **Hugs and Kisses:**

When greeting a child or adult with disabilities, offer a handshake. If they want a hug, give them a side hug. This is particularly important for teens and adults of the opposite sex. Do not allow a teen or adult of the opposite sex to kiss you on the lips. If this happens, do not scold, but firmly establish your boundaries. For example, you might say "Was that appropriate behavior? What should you do?"

2. **Lap Sitting:**

Appropriate sitting on laps may occur with younger children. It should not occur in the teen and adult classrooms.

3. **Back Rubs:**

Although backrubs may seem harmless, it is best to refrain from the practice so it is not misconstrued. It will not be allowed in the teen and adult classrooms.

4. **Casual Touch:**

Gentle and contact that is short in duration during activities may be on students' heads, shoulders, arms and hands is appropriate. Rough-housing and physical discipline should never be used.

This is taken from the Disability Ministry of College Church 2008 Training Manual, Chicago, Ill.