



Code of Conduct for Personnel and Volunteers in the Diocese of Arlington

GUIDELINES FOR A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR ADULT INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Catholic Diocese of Arlington is committed to providing a safe environment for children within all diocesan activities and ministries. Children are a most precious gift and all the faithful cooperate in taking every reasonable action to ensure their safety. An important tool in creating safe environments for children is a uniform Code of Conduct. The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to make clear to clergy, employees and volunteers that certain behaviors are unacceptable and to ensure proper monitoring of all youth.

These guidelines apply to all diocesan, parish and Catholic school activities in the Diocese of Arlington where youth are present.

All adults performing work, ministry or volunteer service within the Church in Arlington are expected to follow these guidelines. Violations of these guidelines are a serious matter and will be investigated and resolved in accordance with diocesan policy.

Those who work with children are serving as stewards of God's precious gift of young life. Keeping this principle in mind will reinforce the need to respect boundaries and to provide an example of a holy life.

DEFINITIONS

A. Adult Volunteer

1. Adult volunteers are defined as those 18 or older who are no longer in high school.
 - 1a. Students who are in high school and have not reached their 19th birthday are to be treated as minors when participating in parish or diocesan activities.
 - 1b. Adult volunteers may not volunteer in their parish's youth ministry program until they reach 21 years of age if they were a participant in its youth activities as a minor.
2. Adult volunteers are not counselors. Their response to situations and conversations by minors may have potential legal implications and they should, therefore, know their boundaries. The role of an adult volunteer is limited to compassionate listening.
3. For the purpose of this document, all instances denoting requirements and/or guidelines for "adult volunteer(s)" are also binding for all clergy and diocesan personnel.

B. Chaperone/Supervisor

1. A Chaperone/Supervisor is defined as an adult volunteer that has oversight or supervisory authority over youth. These individuals share in the responsibility and authority of the

parish or diocesan staff person designated to have oversight of a particular youth event or activity and its leaders.

1a. All Chaperones/Supervisors must be at least 21 years of age.

1b. When determining the appropriate ratio of Chaperones/Supervisors to minors for activities, a husband and wife that have direct supervision over the same group of individuals only count as one Chaperone/Supervisor.

C. Child

1. For the purposes of this Code, “children,” “child,” “minor,” “youth,” or “young person” is defined to mean any person less than 18 years of age.

D. Social Media

1. Social Media is defined as any form of electronic communication through which a user creates, utilizes, accesses, retrieves, and/or visits online communities or systems to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.

2. For the purposes of this Code, Social Media is to encompass, but is not limited to, all of the following: email, texting, chat rooms, instant messaging, social networks, video messaging, on-line message boards, gaming systems, landline and mobile telephones, on-line voice communications, etc.

2a. In accordance with diocesan policy, as stated in 8.1 and 8.2 of the *Information Security Policy, version 12*,

“8.1 All information and messages that are created, sent, received or stored using diocesan communication assets are the sole property of the Diocese, and no user has any ownership interest or expectation of privacy in such communications. The Diocese retains the right, in its sole discretion, to review all information or communications sent, received, stored, or posted using Diocesan communication assets. The Diocese also retains the right to track Internet site, chat room and newsgroup visits, as well as file downloads, for compliance with diocesan policies and for other business reasons. The Diocese has the right to conduct such review without prior notice to the employee. The user consents to allow IS and CDA Management access to, and review of, all materials created, stored, sent or received, by the user through any CDA network or Internet connection. Employees may not intercept or disclose, or assist in intercepting or disclosing, electronic communications.”

and,

“8.2 CDA retains the right to monitor the content of electronic communications. The content of electronic communications and the usage of electronic communications

systems will be monitored to support operational, maintenance, auditing, security, investigative activities and for other business reasons. IS staff will not review the content of an individual user's communications out of personal curiosity or at the request of individuals who have not gone through the proper approval process.

A report of misconduct is to be sent to the Chancellor or the Moderator of the Curia to have email messages or Internet activity reviewed or monitored. The Chancellor or Moderator of the Curia will authorize or deny monitoring. If authorized, the Chancellor or Moderator of the Curia will contact the IS Director to initiate the review/monitoring. The results will be returned to the Chancellor or the Moderator of the Curia.”

FACILITIES

E. Guidelines for Rectories

1. Only clergy, seminarians, members of religious institutes or their directly-related family members may be overnight guests in rectories.
2. Only clergy, seminarians, members of religious institutes or their directly-related family members may be admitted to personal living spaces within rectories (e.g. priests' personal rooms or suites).
3. When visiting clergy, seminarians and/or members of religious institutes stay over-night at the rectory, the Office of the Bishop's Delegate for Clergy is to be notified when it is an extended stay (i.e. more than one week).
4. Exception: On rare occasions, permission may be granted to allow overnight accommodations to adult male friends, which may include their spouse. In these cases, formal written permission is to be sought, in advance, through the Office of the Bishop's Delegate for Clergy.

F. Guidelines for All Other Locations

1. Planned, ongoing meetings with a child may not take place without the knowledge of a parent or guardian.
 - 1a. If one-on-one pastoral care of a minor should be necessary, the adult must not meet with the child in isolated environments. The adult will schedule meetings at appropriate times, and use public locations, that create an environment of transparency and accountability. The adult will also limit both the length and the number of sessions and make appropriate referrals when necessary.
2. Unrelated young persons are not to be in any adult's home without the presence of other responsible adults.

3. An adult volunteer should avoid being alone with a child(ren) in a locker room, restroom, dressing facility or other closed room or isolated area that is inappropriate to a ministry relationship.
4. Normally, youth should not have keys to church facilities. If they need keys because of employment, they should be carefully interviewed and monitored by an adult supervisor.
5. Facilities must be monitored during all organization activities.
6. During all activities, adults are to be available in the building(s) or location and in the presence of the minors where the activity takes place.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

G. Behavior of All Adults

1. Any involvement with minors is to be approached from the premise that minors are restricted individuals. They are NOT independent. Hence, all activities involving minors may only occur with the explicit knowledge and consent of a diocesan representative and the child(ren)'s parents and guardians. They are subject to specific civil laws in the Commonwealth of Virginia, which may prohibit certain activities.
2. All adults are to abide by the local chain of command and by all custody, safety and emergency protocol and safe-environment procedures established by the sponsoring location, which are supplemental to the Diocesan Policy and Code of Conduct.
3. The possession, sale or use of illegal drugs and/or paraphernalia is strictly prohibited.
 - 3a. A child may never be offered an alcoholic beverage, tobacco, drugs or anything else that is prohibited by law.
 - 3b. A child may not consume or partake of an alcoholic beverage, tobacco, drugs or anything else that is prohibited by law in the presence of an adult on church/school property or at any affiliated event.
4. Adult volunteers may not give significant gifts or grant special privileges or opportunities to a specific child. Even small gifts are not to be given to children without the permission or knowledge of a parent or guardian.
5. Adults may not engage in inappropriate conversations or use inappropriate humor, vocabulary, recordings, films, printed materials or games with minors, particularly if the content is of a sexual nature or is otherwise age-inappropriate.
 - 5a. Showing sexually explicit or pornographic material to a child is illegal.
6. Physical contact with another person should be age-appropriate, show respect and kindness, be public, and be non-sexual in nature.

- 6a. Wrestling, tickling, and other acts of “horse-play” with a child must always be avoided.
- 6b. Physical contact when alone with a child should be avoided. Hugging can be an expression of love and respect. However, hugging should always be done in the presence of others and never while alone in a room or behind closed doors.
- 6c. If a child initiates physical contact, an appropriate, limited response is proper. In all cases it must be respectful and non-sexual.
7. If an adult becomes aware of an inappropriate emotional or personal bond, or a physical attraction between that adult and a young person, the adult should maintain clear professional boundaries between himself/herself and the young person, in addition to consulting with a supervisor.
8. Under no circumstance may an adult engage in the physical discipline of a child/youth.
9. If any youth reports feeling uncomfortable with the actions or apparent intentions of an adult volunteer at an activity, this information should be reported to a supervisor immediately.
 - 9a. The adult volunteer is to immediately report any disclosed form of abuse of a minor to Child Protective Services (CPS).
 - 9b. Once a report has been made to CPS, the adult volunteer is then to report the incident to diocesan authorities.
10. If any adult finds the behavior of any fellow adult or child to be concerning or suspicious, that adult should immediately report the information to a supervisor, or if there is a suspicion of child abuse, to the proper legal authorities.
11. Adult volunteers shall refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages for four hours in advance of a youth event.
12. Adult volunteers shall refrain from using tobacco or consuming alcohol in the presence of children at any event or activity.
13. Items designed as weapons or that have the appearance of weapons are strictly prohibited.
 - 13a. Some recreational activities or events utilize tools that have the appearance of weapons, or may be used as such. Within the context of a particular event, these tools are permitted as long as the youth are appropriately monitored. These tools may include: paintball guns, squirt guns, *Nerf* guns, camping tools (i.e., pocket knife, axe, saw, etc.), etc.

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

H. Guidelines for Chaperones/Supervisors of Children at Group Activities

1. Chaperones/Supervisors are responsible for reviewing the Diocese of Arlington Code of Conduct and all related guidelines with the children assigned to them.
2. Two or more adult volunteers must be present for events involving children.
 - 2a. In the event that a sufficient number of Chaperones/Supervisors are not available, the event must be cancelled.
 - 2b. The required minimum ratio for Chaperones/Supervisors to children for a day trip:
 - Preschool 1:4
 - Grades K – 5 1:6
 - Grades 6 – 8 1:8
 - Grades 9 – 12 1:10
 - 2c. The required minimum ratio for Chaperones/Supervisors to children for events lasting more than 12 hours is 1:7
3. If there is only one adult volunteer driver to transport youth, at least two youth must always be present.
4. Clothing must always be in keeping with modesty and Christian values.

I. Off-site Events and Activities

1. Parental permission must be obtained, including a signed medical treatment form, before taking children to any activities off of the parish/school property or event location, even when students are delivered directly to the location.
 - 1a. Adults may not administer medication of any kind without authorized, written parental permission.
 - 1b. A copy of the parental permission and medical form for each young person is to be “in-hand” by a Chaperone/Supervisor for all off-site events. An additional copy is to remain at the parish along with a list of all participants at the event.
 - 1c. A good faith effort should be made to provide the appropriate care or assistance to any ill or injured young person in a life-threatening emergency situation (§8.01-225 (A)(1), Code of the Commonwealth of Virginia).
2. Young people will be assigned to a specific Chaperone/Supervisor who will monitor and supervise their behavior throughout the event or trip.
 - 2a. Both adults and youth are expected to attend activities with the entire group.

- 2b. Adults participating in an event may not go anywhere during the event where the youth may not also go with them.
3. When sponsored programs occur off-campus, Chaperones/Supervisors will be provided information to review with all youth participants to help familiarize them with the program schedule and facility layout where event activities will take place.
 - 3a. All adults should ensure that the young people understand important safety information.
 - 3b. A specific location must be designated where minors will be able to locate their chaperone or supervisor or where the group will meet at an agreed-upon time.
4. Adults should not be alone with a child in a sleeping facility, restroom, dressing facility or other closed room or isolated area that is inappropriate to a ministry relationship.
5. During overnight events, special care must be taken to ensure the safety of young people:
 - 5a. If any adult volunteer must enter a sleeping area with young people, a second adult volunteer must be present.
 - 5b. Any interaction with the youth may not be held within the sleeping quarters.
 - 5c. Under no circumstances shall an unrelated adult share a bed with a child. If an adult must stay in a hotel or other sleeping room with children, the adult must sleep in his or her own bed, using a rollaway, cot or other bedding materials if necessary.
 - 5d. During overnight activities, Chaperones/Supervisors are responsible for establishing and enforcing a curfew.
 - 5e. Chaperones/Supervisors must check rooms on a regular basis after curfew to ensure that young people are located within and remain in their rooms.
 - 5f. A Chaperone must be available and on-watch in a designated location throughout the night. This adult is also responsible for monitoring sleeping arrangements in which adults are also present with minors throughout the night.

J. Photography

1. Photographs of single or specific children may not be taken without the knowledge and permission of a parent or guardian.
 - 1a. Parental permission granted for the photographs or videos of minors must be done so in writing prior to the event and renewed each year.

- 1b. Adults may never take photographs of children while they are unclothed or dressing.
2. Parental permission must be granted for the publishing of a minor's name and done so in writing prior to publication.
3. Copies of photographs must be readily available to parents and guardians immediately upon request.

SOCIAL MEDIA, COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

K. General Guidelines for Social Media

1. All ministry social networks and communication should be open and transparent.
2. All clergy must always self-identify themselves as clergy with the appropriate title in their username and/or profile.
3. Clergy social media accounts are always to be presumed to be ministry accounts and thus to be open and transparent.
4. Personal social media accounts may not be used for ministry communication with minors.
5. Each ministry that communicates with minors should establish a dedicated account that is used exclusively for ministerial purposes and that may be accessed, monitored and used by more than one unrelated adult volunteer.
6. Use of social media communication for private one-on-one contact with minors is not permitted. In the rare event that these activities occur, the communication must be kept on-file and at the organization location in an easily accessible format.
7. Written permission from their parent(s) or the legal guardian is necessary prior to any electronic communication with a minor that cannot be openly seen by the parents and unrelated adults.
8. All text-based communications sent to or received from young people must be copied to their parent(s) or the legal guardian or an additional adult volunteer. These communications must be kept on-file and at the organization location in an easily accessible format.
9. Communication with minors via electronic means is to be restricted to the hours that are appropriate for a phone call to the residence, except in the event of an emergency or to communicate time-sensitive information.
10. The "tagging" of a minor in a picture or video is prohibited.

10a. If an electronic photograph or video is posted on any ministry site, all names related to minors must be removed.

11. Further advancements in technology may require periodic updates and addendums to this section of the Code of Conduct. The universal principles provided for above are to be applied prudently and judiciously in the event an update has not occurred.



Code of Conduct Receipt for Personnel and Volunteers in the Diocese of Arlington

The following is the official receipt denoting that the individual whose signature appears below has read and understands the guidelines contained in the attached document. This sheet will be kept on file at the Office of Child Protection and Safety indefinitely.

Please complete and return to your parish/school location.

I have read and understand the guidelines contained in the Code of Conduct for the Diocese of Arlington. I intend to follow these guidelines and to monitor and protect children and young people in my service to the Church.

Full Legal Name (Please Print)

Signature

Date

Position/Ministry

Parish/School/Organization

Email or Phone Number