

## **Diocese of Gary Guidelines for a Safe Environment for Our Youth**

These guidelines support the Diocese of Gary Safe Environment Plan viz., the policy regarding “*Sexual Misconduct Toward Minors and Others at Risk.*” The guidelines describe actions and/or responses that are rooted in sound, appropriate, approved practices.

**Youth** are identified as those who have not graduated from high school nor have reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **Expectations**

#### **Adult Supervisors and Clergy**

- Conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church in mind and deed.
- Are in compliance with the Diocese of Gary Safe Environment requirements – this includes young adults 18-21 years of age.
- Are 21 years of age or older; young adults 18-21 may be allowed to serve in a supervisory role provided that they are accompanied by at least one adult 21 years of age or older who is Virtus trained.
- Have authorized criminal background and reference checks.
- Are aware of state laws regarding mandated reporting of abusive or inappropriate behaviors toward youth.
- Report incidences or suspicions of abusive and/or inappropriate behaviors toward youth to immediate superiors and/or appropriate authorities.
- Submit a “Diocese of Gary Adult Driver Information Form,” as needed, to the appropriate authority; provide appropriate license and insurance information.

### **Supervision**

#### **Adult Supervisors and Clergy**

- Ensure that a “Release Form” is completed by parent/guardian when activities are held away from the parish/school; a health form is submitted before allowing youth to participate in on-going athletic events.
- Provide for an adequate number of adults at all youth events; a recommended ratio of adult leaders to youth is 1:7; with the ratio not to exceed 1:10.
- Secure additional adults for any event involving youth in high risk or overnight settings; secure male and female chaperones when both sexes of youth are present.
- Never schedule activities that conflict with curfew laws governing minors.
- Closely monitor facilities, church services and other environments when youth are present; never give youth keys to any church/school facilities.
- Never administer medication of any kind to youth without written parent/guardian permission.

- Never use any form of physical discipline.
- Release youth only to the custodial parent, guardian, or other adult designated by parent.
- Use a “buddy system” when events are held away from church/school property, e.g., never permit a child to leave the group or cross a road alone while in custodial care.

## **Behavioral**

### **Adult Supervisors and Clergy**

- Never engage in topics, humor, vocabulary, recordings, films, games or the use of technology that could not be used comfortably in the presence of parents/ guardians.
- Always hold one-on-one meetings with youth in areas that are visible and accessible, if such an area is not available the door to the meeting room is left open and another staff member is notified.
- Never drive alone with a youth or meet with a youth alone in a residence, hotel, locker or rest rooms, a dressing facility or in any other closed or isolated area.
- Never share a bed with youth; no adult should share a sleeping room with youth unless they are a direct family member.
- Never take unaccompanied youth on a trip, e.g., to a cottage, without other adults present.
- Never purchase or share alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, videos or reading materials that are inappropriate with youth.
- Never be in possession of or drink alcohol while supervising minors or participating in a youth event.
- Take care to avoid initiating hugs; if a youth initiates physical contact, a limited response is appropriate.

## **Technology, Social Media and Networking**

### **A. Registration Technologies and Securing Private Information**

#### **Adult Supervisors and Clergy**

- Ensure that no sensitive personal information – particularly financial information (credit card and/or checking account numbers) and secure identifiers (social security numbers) - is ever transmitted through e- mail or web pages.
- Handle all financial transactions “in real time” that is, on a commerce website that can process credit card transactions online, assuring that no financial data need be communicated to the parish/organization.
- Do not create forms using technology that is beyond the technical competence of the webmaster or staff person responsible for registration forms; contact a technology/ web solution provider for assistance.

### **B. Websites/Social Media**

#### **Adult Supervisors and Clergy**

- Are informed of terms of use, age restrictions and privacy options and controls for any site prior to establishing a ministry presence.



- Always inform parents that a social networking site is being used as a standard part of the ministry.
- Establish separate sites and pages for personal and professional/ministerial use; the official organizational logo or standard images appear on the organization's official site to identify it as such.
- Be vigilant that on personal or networking sites you represent yourself as a minister of the Catholic Church in all interactions that may be viewed publicly.
- Allow at least two other adults, who function in an official parish, school and/or organizational capacity, full administrative access to the account/sites; provide them with e-mail alerts of page updates and activity.
- Never advertise or make personal pages and/or information accessible to youth.
- Always avoid anything that might cause scandal to your ministry; never mention inappropriate use of alcohol, advocacy of inappropriate music/movies, inappropriate language, inappropriate dress or the expression of opinions that are contrary to the teaching of the Catholic Church.
- Never initiate a "friend request."
- Never "tag" or identify, by name, youth in photographs; it is recommended that the "no tagging" option be set on the original social networking site.
- Never post personal photographs or information of parish, school, or organization staff or volunteers; this includes family pictures, social events, home phone numbers and addresses, personal e-mail accounts, etc.

### **C. E-Mail and Text/Instant Messaging**

#### **Adult Supervisors and Clergy**

- Always inform parents/guardians of the use of e-mail or instant messaging for communication purposes with minors as a standard part of youth ministry.
- Always maintain separate e-mail accounts for personal/professional communications.
- Use the parish, school or organizational e-mail account when communicating parish, school or organizational business - never a home or personal account.
- Ensure that all communications are professional and that these are being rendered on behalf of the parish, school or organization.
- Use e-mail and instant messaging only in matters that deal with one's professional relationship or in matters related to the ministry/activity.
- Remember that there is no such thing as a private e-mail/instant message.
- Observe the same boundaries used in oral/personal communication when communicating via e-mail/text messages.
- Avoid overstepping the boundaries of adult/youth relationships; avoid communication that might be construed as having sexual overtones; never reply to any such e-mail; make and keep a copy of any such inappropriate communication and notify a supervisor if necessary.
- Avoid engaging in any postings/communications that could be misconstrued or misinterpreted remembering that e-mail, text messages and instant messages can be logged, archived and forwarded to other parties.
- Always double check messages to see if a reader might read something into it that is not intended or if the message might be misinterpreted or misunderstood.
- Remember that communications are organizational in nature, may be viewed by the organization at any time and may be subject to legal action.

- Avoid sending a message in haste or when emotions are involved.
- Establish clear guidelines/parameters with regard to times of communication between adults and youth; predetermine a time when it is too late to take a professional call, except in the case of serious urgency.

#### **D. Blogging**

##### **Adult Supervisors and Clergy**

- Ensure that all professional/ministerial settings, posted information, opinions, references and resources are in compliance with the teachings of the Catholic Church and are being rendered on behalf of the parish, school or organization.
- Inform parents/guardians of the use of blogging with minors as a standard part of youth ministry.
- Utilize blogs to promote upcoming events or programs and for the purpose of evangelization providing resources and information within ministry settings
- Ensure that if youth are to engage in blogging as part of an officially sanctioned activity, the activity is monitored by at least two adults, no youth is identified by name or personal information and inappropriate blogs are removed.
- Separate personal/professional communications; do not use blogs to conduct or promote outside business and/or personal activities; never make information regarding personal blogs available to youth.
- Never divulge the name or any personal information regarding those being ministered to.

#### **E. On Line Video, Chat Rooms, Skype and “Face Time”**

##### **Adult Supervisors and Clergy**

- Always inform parents/guardians of the use of such communication with minors as a standard part of youth ministry.
- Remember that when presenting personal opinions and engaging in chats/discussions, others may assume these opinions represent the teachings/values of the Catholic Church.
- Use streaming video only for education, communication and promotional purposes.
- Never use live streaming, one-on-one video or other communication technologies that lead to, support or encourage an exclusive minor-adult relationship.
- Take extreme care to protect the privacy of youth when posting videos on line; such videos are utilized only to showcase/advertise ministry-related events and activities.

#### **Photographic images of youth – youth under age of 13**

##### **Adult Supervisors and Clergy**

- Always obtain written permission from the parent/guardian to use any photographic images for publicity/marketing such as brochures, newsletters or web sites.
- Never include the youth’s name, or contact information in photos that are published.



## **Photographic images of youth – youth between the ages of 13 and 18**

- Always obtain written permission from the parent/guardian to use any identifiable photographic images for publicity/marketing such brochures, fliers, web sites.
- Always obtain written permission when using youth in a planned project, e.g., using youth as “models” and the photographic images are identifiable.
- Always obtain written permission from parent/guardian for any type of video that show youth doing work or in discussion; this video is considered an “education record.”

The safest photographic images of youth over 13 used for publicity/marketing are unidentifiable images, i.e., those images taken at a distance, from the side, from the top or of a large group activity.

### **For Clergy**

- Always notify parent/guardian of scheduled one-on-one pastoral care of youth.
- Always schedule session at times and locations that allow for security and accountability.
- Always limit the length and number of sessions; make professional referrals appropriately.
- Never allow individual youth to socialize in the rectory; ensure other priests or adults are present.
- Never allow youth into the sleeping areas of the rectory; only the families of priests and seminarians may be overnight guests in the rectory.

## **General considerations and practical suggestions**

### **Adult Supervisors and Clergy**

#### **Contact with youth that is permissible**

Verbal praise	Hugs initiated by youth	Blessings on the head
Pats on the shoulders or back	Holding hands with small children	Holding hands during prayer

#### **Contact with youth that is never permissible**

Verbal abuse/Sexual innuendo	Inappropriate/lengthy embraces	Any type of massage given by an adult to a minor
Touching knees or legs	Tickling	Any form of unwanted affection/physical contact
Piggy back rides	Holding children over age four on the lap	
Wrestling		
Kissing		

# Photo Release Form

I hereby grant the **Northwest Indiana Catholic** newspaper permission to use my likeness in a photograph in any and all of its publications, including newspaper and website entries, without payment or any other consideration.

I understand and agree that these materials will become the property of the **Northwest Indiana Catholic** and will not be returned.

I hereby irrevocably authorize the **Northwest Indiana Catholic** to edit, alter, copy, exhibit, publish or distribute this photo for purposes of publicizing the **Northwest Indiana Catholic** programs or for any other lawful purpose. In addition, I waive the right to inspect or approve the finished product, including written or electronic copy, wherein my likeness appears. Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising or related to the use of the photograph.

I hereby hold harmless and release and forever discharge the **Northwest Indiana Catholic** from all claims, demands, and causes of action which I, my heirs, representatives, executors, administrators, or any other persons acting on my behalf or on behalf of my estate have or may have by reason of this authorization.

I am 18 years of age and am competent to contract in my own name. I have read this release before signing below and I fully understand the contents, meaning, and impact of this release.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature) (Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed Name) (Date)

If the person signing is under age 18, there must be consent by a parent or guardian, as follows:

I hereby certify that I am the parent or guardian of \_\_\_\_\_, named above, and do hereby give my consent without reservation to the foregoing on behalf of this person.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/Guardian's Signature) (Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/Guardian's Printed Name)

## WITNESS (For Catholic Schools)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Principal's Signature) (Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Principal's Printed Name) Witness Signature