



Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

Office of Safe Environment

I acknowledge receipt and review of the following for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston:

CODE OF CONDUCT: Supervision Procedures

- Have adequate number of adults present at events involving children and youth.
- Have two or more adults present for events involving children or youth in higher risk settings.
- Monitor your facilities during church services and all school or other activities.
- Release children only to parent or guardian.
- Obtain parental permission, including a signed medical treatment form, before taking children or youth on trips.
- Always obtain parental approval before permitting any minor to participate in athletic events or any other activity that involves potential risk.
- Have minors use a “buddy system” whenever they go on trips away from church property.
- All adult leadership and sponsors for any overnight activities should be approved in advance by the appropriate administrator.

CODE OF CONDUCT: Behavioral Guidelines for Working with Children or Youth

All clergy, staff and volunteers of the Diocese will observe the following guidelines for dealing with minors:

- No minor child may be an overnight guest or reside in any church rectory or other living quarters of priests.
- Do not provide minors with alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs or anything that is prohibited by law.
- Do not serve as a chaperone for activities that conflict with curfew laws pertaining to minors.
- Touching should be age appropriate and based on the need of the minor and not on the need of the adult. Avoid physical contact when alone with a minor. If a minor initiates physical contact, an appropriate, limited response is proper.
- Do not engage in the physical discipline of a minor. Discipline problems should be handled in coordination with your supervisor and/or the parents of the minor.
- Do not be alone with a minor in a residence, sleeping facility, locker room, restroom, dressing facility or other closed room or isolated area that is inappropriate to a ministry relationship.
- Do not take an overnight trip alone with a minor who is not a member of your immediate family.

- Do not sleep in the same bed with a minor. If an adult supervisor stays in a hotel or other sleeping room with a group of minors, the supervisor should sleep in his or her own bed using a roll away or cot if necessary.
- Topics, vocabulary, recordings, films, games or the use of computer software or any other form of personal interaction or entertainment that could not be used comfortably in the presence of parents should not be employed with minors. Sexually explicit or pornographic material is never appropriate.
- Do not administer medication of any kind without written parental permission.
- If you recognize inappropriate personal or physical attraction developing between yourself and a minor, maintain clear professional boundaries between yourself and the minor or refer the minor to another adult supervisor.
- If one-on-one pastoral care of minor should be necessary, avoid meeting in isolated environments. Schedule meetings at times and use locations that create accountability. Limit both the length and number of sessions, and make appropriate referrals. Notify parents of the meetings.
- Do not give minors keys to church facilities. If the minor has a key as a result of being a church employee or volunteer, the minor should be properly screened.
- Do not drive a church or school vehicle unless you have received prior authorization and have the appropriate license and/or certification.
- Do not permit minors to cross a road by themselves while they are in your custodial care.
- Do not take photographs of minors while they are unclothed or dressing (e.g. in a locker room or bathing facility).
- If you observe anyone (adult or minor) abusing a minor, take appropriate steps to immediately intervene and to provide a safe environment for the minor. Report the misconduct (see Obligation to Report).

CODE OF CONDUCT: Guidelines for Online/Remote Learning

These guidelines apply to the use of online/electronic platforms to safely and effectively facilitate communication and learning via video or audio conferencing as opposed to being physically present in a parish or other facility/structure.

Although most learning throughout the Diocese is accomplished in a parish or school setting, the Diocese recognizes that occasions may arise when it is appropriate and helpful to offer learning via other means, including online/electronic.

These guidelines exist to foster a Safe Environment when utilizing online/electronic means of learning.

For parishes and programs that wish to provide online learning for minors in parish school of religion classes, confirmation classes, Teaching Safety classes, youth groups, or other parish-related subject matter, the following guidelines are required:

The adults overseeing the activity must be compliant with Safe Environment to include: completion of awareness training, background check, and policy form.

There must be at least two Safe Environment-compliant adults present on each group video/call.

Parents must give consent for their children to participate in a group video/call. Consent may be obtained via email, text, or form. Documentation of consent must be kept on file with other Safe Environment documentation.

Parents must be informed in advance of the day, date, and time of a group video/call as well as a summary of the nature and subject matter of the video/call. This may be accomplished via email, text, or form. Documentation must be kept on file with other Safe Environment documentation.

Videos/calls should be scheduled during reasonable hours/timeframes. Do not schedule videos/calls late at night or very early in the morning.

Parents are always welcome to listen along with their children in a group video/call if they choose.

The platform selected for the video/call must be safe, reputable, and user-friendly.

All participants on a video must be appropriately attired, just like participating in an activity in a public setting.

Each group video/call should begin with a statement that appropriate conduct/behavioral norms do apply, just like a classroom/parish/public setting.

Parishes must be mindful of families who do not have the capability to connect via online/electronic methods and must make information available via hard-copy, if applicable. (For example, a PSR lesson or a Teaching Safety lesson)

Definitions (from the DWC Sex Abuse Policy)

2.2 “Sexual Abuse”

A. Child abuse means any form of intentional or malicious infliction of injury to the detriment of a child’s physical, moral, or mental well-being.

B. Sexual misconduct/abuse means any form of sexual conduct that is unlawful; that is contrary to the moral instructions, doctrines, and canon law of the Catholic Church; and causes injury to another. It may constitute either sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation or child pornography. If a cleric has otherwise committed an offense against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue with force or threats or publicly or with a minor below the age of eighteen (18), the cleric is to be punished with just penalties, including dismissal from the clerical state if the case warrants it.

Compliance with West Virginia Law (from the DWC Sex Abuse Policy)

5.0 The Diocese complies with West Virginia laws regarding reporting of suspected child abuse to civil authorities.

5.1 Under West Virginia law, the following persons are mandated to report suspected child abuse: medical, dental or mental health professional, Christian Science practitioner, religious healer, school teacher or other school personnel, social service worker, child care or foster care worker, emergency medical services personnel, peace officer, law-enforcement official, or member of the clergy.

Additionally, any other person may make a report if such person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected.

Obligation to Report (from the DWC Sex Abuse Policy)

6.0 Any personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston who has actual knowledge of or who has reasonable cause to suspect an incident of sexual abuse by any personnel of the Diocese shall comply with all applicable reporting or other requirements of state and local laws, and shall report to the Diocese as stipulated below (unless to do so would violate the priest penitent relationship of the Sacrament of penance):

6.1 The Diocese is committed to a prompt response to any individual or family alleging child sexual abuse. The Diocese shall respond to child sexual abuse reports within 24 hours and shall report any such claims to the appropriate public authorities within 24 hours as required by W.Va. Code §49-2-803.

Signature

Printed name

Date