

PROTECTION of CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY

Appendix – Electronic Communications Best Practices

Whenever an employee/volunteer is acting in their capacity as a “representative” of the Catholic Church as a volunteer or employee, he/she shall abide by the electronic communication policy outlined in the Protection of Children & Young People Policy Manual. The policy is not intended to limit the ability of volunteers/employees to communicate with minors within parishes, schools, or other entities of the Diocese of Jackson, but to allow the communication to revolve around a professional or organizational level. The following is a list of media communications tools current best practices for the use in order to adhere to the policy.

Websites

One of the best ways to promote activities is through an organization website. Best practices are:

- All web content should consistently represent the views/teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Your official logo or standard pictures/images should appear on the site to identify it as the organization's official site.
- Assign an individual to keep these sites updated on a regular basis.
- A minimum of two adults in a functioning official organizational capacity should have full access to all organizational accounts/sites.
- No personal information or contact information regarding minors should be posted or available on public websites.
- Written permission from parents or guardians must be obtained prior to posting pictures or identifying information of minors on any website. Permission should include if names can be used.
- Create a secured page as needed for specific groups to communication information not needed or appropriate for general visitors to the website.
- Any social media sites that are linked to your website/page should have the organizational email account associated with it and not a personal email account. This protects the organization and the individual. It also allows a means to create/delete administrators for the website/page so when there are staff/volunteer turnover, things still run smoothly, and changes are properly made and maintained.
- No inappropriate pictures/information of any parish or school employee/volunteer should appear on any page/site. This includes family pictures, social events, home phone numbers/addresses and personal emails accounts, etc.

Email

The use of email to communicate with minors is an acceptable means of communication as long as it is used appropriately. The following are best practices to keep in mind when sending emails.

- Organizational email accounts for leaders, administrators and volunteers (as needed) should be created for professional communication means.
- Communications should always be professional and relevant to the current activity/need.
- Maintain professionalism and keep appropriate boundaries in all communications. Do not overstep the boundaries of adult/child relationships.
- Make and keep a copy of the inappropriate communication and notify your supervisor or pastor immediately.
- Be aware that what you write will more than likely be read by others. It is easy to share and forward messages.
- There is no such thing as a private email. Ask yourself if you would be embarrassed if a supervisor/pastor read your message. If the answer is yes, then don't send it.
- Emails can easily be misread or misunderstood.
 - Always double check to see if anything could be “read” into what you have typed. If you think it can be misread, either retype it or don't send it.
 - Never send messages when you are in a hurry or when emotions are involved.

Social Media

Social networking may be used to connect minors with Church ministry activities as specified in the following:

- The leaders must utilize the dedicated organizational email account to create a social media account.
- The ministry site must be completely separate from any personal site.
 - Make sure to check on the terms of use, age restrictions and privacy options/controls for each site you plan to use prior to establishing a page for your organization and ensuring it is set up securely and properly.
 - Make sure that the “no tagging” option is set to ensure no one’s privacy is breached.
- At least two adults should be registered to have email alerts of page activity sent to their official organizational email accounts.
 - Having at least two adults registered to the account allows for quicker response time to urgent requests
 - Helps to ensure all postings are appropriate.
 - This process maintains the appropriate boundaries and keeps the relationship professional.
- All information displayed on the social networking sites must reflect the values of the Catholic faith and should always follow the teaching of the church.
- If using the Message feature through social media, another adult such as parent, supervisor, pastor, or LEM must be included in the message sent.

Text Messaging

Group texting is an acceptable, convenient, and quick means to communicate information. The following best practices should be considered.

- Texts to minors are only to be used when communicating about a church or organizational activity.
 - Messages of a personal nature are not to be sent to minors by Church employees or volunteers.
 - Do not encourage minors to use texting for communicating personal messages to you in your role as employee/volunteer of the Church.
- Parents are to be informed that text messaging is being used as a form of communication with the minors of your church/organization and that it is a standard part of the youth ministry.
- Text messages sent to minors must be copied to the Supervisor or his/her Church designee and/or parent/guardian.
- Parents/guardians are to be copied if they have made the request and provided a cell number.
- If an employee/volunteer should not reply to an inappropriate text from a minor.

Instant Messaging

- Instant messages to an individual should only come through the designated organizational account with a copy to the pastor/supervisor and parent/guardian.
- Parents are to be informed that emails are being used as a form of communication with the minors of your church or organization and that these are standards of the youth ministry.
- If a minor child/youth attempts to communicate via the employee/volunteer personal e-mail account or by instant message, the employee/volunteer must notify his/her supervisor or pastor immediately.

Virtual/Live Streaming

- Use virtual accounts established by the church organization rather than personal accounts.
- Use pre-recorded information when possible.
- When streaming “live” be sure parents are notified
- When live streaming, avoid including minors unless written parental permission has been obtained.
- Virtual presentations/live streaming are to be monitored by an adult supervisor or other adult in ministry.