

POLICY CONCERNING SUPERVISION OF MINORS ON TRIPS & OTHER FUNCTIONS



Diocese of Alexandria

As stated in the Preamble of the Diocesan Policy Concerning Sexual Abuse of Minors by Clerics, Employees, or Commissioned Volunteers, “Sacred Scripture teaches that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God, from which flows the dignity of the human person. The Church safeguards and protects this God-given dignity and condemns all forms of abuse or neglect of people of all ages. The policy presented here deals specifically with the sexual abuse of a minor by a priest, deacon, lay person, employee or volunteer as well as the Diocese’s obligation to protect children and young people by providing a safe environment in order to prevent sexual abuse.”

“The Church must be exemplary. Clergy, staff, and volunteers should and will be held accountable for their behavior. In order to maintain the highest level of accountability, there must be a clear and unambiguous blueprint of appropriate and inappropriate behavior. The Code of Pastoral Conduct provides a basic structure for identifying limits. It is intended as a ‘continuous improvement document’.”

The following guidelines have been approved by the Bishop of the Diocese of Alexandria and are intended for the diocese, parishes, schools, and other institutions.

These rules, regulations, requests, and requirements are to be followed by all who are ministering to minors, especially those traveling overnight both inside and outside the diocese.

Types of groups would include Diocesan, School, and Parish retreats, sports tournaments, conventions and conferences, and recreational trips. Independently sponsored organizations, such as St. Vincent de Paul, Knights of Columbus, and Scouting, are exempt from this policy.

Louisiana Law states that any person who is 18 years of age or older is considered to be the major age. As a result of this classification, those who are of the major age, 18, and have completed high school, can be considered as youth ministers and chaperones for the Diocese. The Diocese of Alexandria strongly encourages having youth ministers and chaperones who are 21 years of age or older.

I. Authorization

In the case of schools, field trips must be approved, both for planning and implementation, by the principal and must meet the diocesan guidelines for field trips. All other parish trips must have the approval of the pastor of the parish both for planning and implementation.

II. Elementary School Grade (PreK-8) Field Trips

Elementary school field trips are limited to one day in duration (no over night stay) and destinations within 100 miles radius of the school. Any exceptions to this must be submitted in writing within 15 days of the trip to the Bishop for approval.

III. Liability and Medical Release and Request to Participate Form

Signed parental permission slips are required for all field trips involving minors. Forms shall be obtained from the Diocesan offices of Catholic Schools or Religious Formation & Training.

IV. Transportation

Transportation regulations are as follows:

1. It is preferred that transportation be commercially provided by licensed and bonded carriers. If transportation is provided by parents, rather than the school or parish, the parent must submit to the principal and/or pastor a completed Driver Information Form.
2. When more than one vehicle is used to transport participants, all drivers must have written directions and should be familiar with the area where they will be traveling.
3. On long trips, a relief driver must be available at least every eight hours. All drivers should have adequate rest before and after travel.
4. Cars, vans and buses must not exceed the passenger load. All passengers must have a seat; seat belt laws are to be observed at all times.
5. No weapons are to be carried in any vehicle at any time.

V. Sleeping Accommodations

1. Adults and chaperones are not to be housed in the same room with minors except when the minor is the adult or chaperone's own child.
2. As an exception to #1 above, in a large dorm situation, adults or chaperones may be housed in the same room with minors provided that at least 2 adults or chaperones are assigned to the dorm.
3. Adults and chaperones are not to use a community shower, nor should an adult or chaperone be in any questionable state of undress.
4. The monitoring of clothes changing or showering of minors is not to be supervised by a lone adult or chaperone and never an adult of the opposite sex. More than one adult or chaperone must be present during these times. All adults and chaperones must understand that extreme caution must be exercised at these times so that no actions, words, stares, or touches have the potential for misinterpretation. Any disciplinary actions are to be carried out after the minor has had the time to be properly dressed and must take place outside of the changing and bathroom areas. For example: At Maryhill Retreat Center, when minors are using the bathrooms, adults or chaperones should not be in the bathroom area. Should a need arise to enter the bathroom, it should only be for a brief period of time.
5. Conversations with minors must always be conducted only when the minors and adults are properly dressed.
6. There is to be no co-ed sleeping in tents or hotel rooms.

VI. Outdoor Camping

1. It is strongly recommended that tents which can accommodate large numbers be used whenever possible. This will allow for better supervision.
2. There is to be no co-ed sleeping in tents.
3. In the event that outdoor camping is held without tents, there must be enough chaperones available so that at least one chaperone remains awake throughout the night to ensure that no minor wanders away from the campsite.
4. Adults or chaperones are not to sleep in a tent alone with a minor, except when the minor is the adult or chaperone's own child.

VII. Hotel Rooms

1. Care is to be taken when booking hotels for groups. A request must be made upon making reservations that, if possible, all of the rooms be on the same floors or location in the hotel.
2. All rooms must be checked by the group leader before assigning them to groups to avoid males and females having adjoining doors. Adjoining rooms should only be shared by minors of the same gender.
3. No minor is to be allowed to leave the hotel property or go swimming in the hotel's pool or use the whirlpool or the hotel's exercise room without adult supervision.
4. Minors must always be informed and reminded of safety rules and security measures.
5. Chaperones must have room keys at all times for minors' rooms and it is recommended that the chaperone monitor rooms periodically. Minors must never be allowed unsupervised access to the hotel rooms.

VIII. Other Accommodations

Care is to be taken that sleeping areas are clearly segregated between males and females. In situations where males and females share a common large room (example: a parish hall), a sufficient number of chaperones should be provided on a rotating schedule to provide constant supervision.

IX. Expectations

1. An adult or chaperone is not allowed to have minors spend the night at his or her home, especially as a Church-sponsored activity, without another adult or chaperone present.
2. Caution must be taken when viewing any movies that may contain any violence or sexually-explicit content. All movies are to be screened and approved by an adult or chaperone before minors view them.
3. All prescription medications must be in the original containers and must remain in the care of and be administered by an adult or chaperone. Parental permission slips must be checked before dispensing any medication.
4. Priority must be given during any Church or school overnight trip to ensure that all participants fulfill their Sunday and Holy Day obligations.
5. Liability and Medical Release and Request to Participate Form must be filled out each year for the events that will happen within the parish, diocese, outside the diocese, and for school sponsored trips. Youth ministers and/or coordinators will keep the forms on file for a year. A copy of the forms must be given to the director, superintendent, and/or coordinator of the event.

X. Adults and Chaperones

1. All adults and chaperones are required to read and be familiar with the Diocese of Alexandria's Policy Concerning the Sexual Abuse of Minors. Each adult and chaperone must be in compliance with the policy.
2. It is required that there be a minimum of one chaperone per eight minors.
3. All adults and chaperones must abide by the same rules and requirements given to minors (example: no alcohol consumption).
4. No adult or chaperone who has been convicted of or is undergoing legal prosecution for any criminal act or misconduct is to be allowed to chaperone any minors.
5. The Pastor, Principal, or Supervisor must clear all adults and chaperones of each individual event.
6. Adults or chaperones shall not at any time purchase questionable or illegal items for a minor (examples: cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, weapons, condoms, and sexually-suggestive materials) and shall confiscate these items from minors.
7. Adults and chaperones are encouraged to carry beepers or cellular phones on trips, in case of emergencies.
8. When traveling out of town, emergency cards must be provided for each participant with the names of leaders, hotel name, and telephone numbers. The emergency cards will also be provided for the school principal/the parish, and each participant's family.
9. Adults and chaperones are strongly encouraged to refrain from smoking while in the presence of minors.

XI. Notification

1. A detailed list of all participants, adults, and chaperones with telephone numbers and emergency contact persons must be left with the school, parish, or agency sponsoring the trip.
2. The Pastor, Principal, Superintendent, agency Administrator, and Director of Religious Formation & Training are to be immediately notified of any major accident or disciplinary need during the trip. The Pastor or Principal shall immediately notify the Diocesan Risk Manager.
3. Any adult or chaperone coming into the Diocese of Alexandria for any event must have documented proof that you are in compliance with your Diocesan Policy for the Protection of Minors.