

Diocese of Birmingham Child and Youth Protection Policy

This document governs all those who have contact with minors. Included is any program, service or ministry conducted, hosted or sponsored by a Catholic institution within the Diocese of Birmingham. “Minors” is defined as **any person under the age of 18**.

“School” refers to any institution under the supervision of the Catholic Schools Office of the Diocese of Birmingham.

Code of Conduct

Clergy, religious, employees and volunteers must, at all times, be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their service to young people and their families. They must also know that God’s goodness and grace support them in their faithful service.

Responsibility for adherence to this policy rests with each individual. Anyone who fails to comply is subject to remedial action. Appropriate action may take a variety of forms, from verbal reproach to removal from service. Specific action is dependent on the nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of harm.

General Principles

The following fundamental principles, shall apply to the behavior of all those who have either regular contact with minors or have a reasonable chance of being alone with a minor:

- They will strive to exhibit the highest Christian moral standards and personal integrity in their work and personal lives; supporting the teaching, and tradition of the Catholic Church.
- They will strive to conduct themselves in a respectful manner toward all people.
- They will protect the confidentiality of all sensitive information to which they have access.
- They will not take unfair advantage of relationships made through church involvement.
- They will not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or exploit anyone.
- They will not neglect a minor who is in their care.

The policy is not intended to address all possible situations. Rather, it is to shape the behavior of all those who serve young people in the name of the Church.

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Standards

Programs and institutions under the supervision of the Superintendent of Catholic Schools are subject to the policies and standard operating procedures of the Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Birmingham.

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1. Each minor must present a properly signed Consent and Health Form (CH-1) to participate in any event taking place away from parish/school property and any overnight or high-risk

event regardless of where it occurs. The current diocesan form must be used. Completed forms are maintained in parish/school records for at least three years after each event.

2. Each adult must give consent for and successfully pass a criminal background check.
3. Any person who desires to volunteer with minors must have been a participating member of the parish for at least 6 months before being permitted to work with minors.
4. The pastor/principal (or designee) must arrange for a responsible and qualified adult to monitor any new employee or volunteer as he or she interacts with minors. The monitoring period must be at least 6 months.
5. Record Keeping: Each institution must keep current records of volunteers and staff that have completed youth protection training and criminal background screens: Records may be reviewed at any time by diocesan representatives. Institutions found to be out of compliance will have 30 days to correct deficiencies. Institutions not in compliance after 30 days are reported to the Bishop.
6. Each parish/school must ensure that adults engaged in work with minors have met current diocesan training standards. Each adult engaged in education, ministry, or service with children or youth must be approved by his or her pastor before becoming involved.

Safe Environment Rules

- 1 **Report Required:** Adults must report to proper authorities when:
 - a) An allegation against an adult is made by a minor.
 - b) There is sufficient evidence that a minor has been abused or neglected by an adult.
- 2 **Qualified Adult Leadership:** Adequate adult leadership is essential to safe and effective ministry. "Qualified adult" is a person who:
 - a) Is at least 21 years of age.
 - b) Has a up-to-date clearance through the diocesan criminal background check for volunteers.
 - c) Has participated in the diocesan training course, **Youth Protection 1**. Session participation must be repeated at least every 3 years.
 - d) Has received a copy of the diocesan document, **Child and Youth Protection Policy**.
 - e) Participation in **Youth Protection 2** is required for anyone who supervises a church/school facility and/or supervises other adults working with minors. Both Session 1 and 2 are conducted by personnel from the Department of Catholic Education and Lifelong Learning, Diocese of Birmingham.
- 3 **First Aid/CPR:** At least one adult or young adult (age 18 to 21) with a current first aid/CPR certificate must be present at any child or youth function.
- 4 **First Aid Kit:** An adequate first-aid kit must be present and available to all adults in leadership roles.
- 5 **AED:** If the institution has an AED (automatic electronic defibrillator) it must be accessible to adults in leadership roles.

- 6 **Crisis Planning:** Every facility used for child or youth programs must have plans for dealing with crisis situations. Examples of possible situations: violent weather, serious personal injury or illness, fire, explosion, hostage, etc.
- 7 **Minimum supervisory requirements:**
- a) **Classroom:** It is always preferable to maintain at least the adult to minor ratios described in item 7b (below). However, when it is not possible and the event/class is located in a classroom setting, the following are *absolute* minimums:
- i) Clear visibility from common areas into all spaces occupied by minors. This is usually achieved by glass panels or open doors.
 - ii) A minimum of 1 qualified adult in every instructional space.
 - iii) In addition to adults in instructional spaces, qualified adult supervisors who are in charge of the building must be present and visible in the building with immediate access to any space occupied by minors.
 - (1) The building supervisor must be accessible to any minor, adult or visitor. Building supervisors must roam hallways and other common areas, checking each space accessible to minors or adults. Each space must be checked at least once every 45 minutes.
- b) **Two-Deep Leadership:** A minimum of 2 qualified adults must be present. If both male and female minors are present, male and female adult supervision is required. The following ratios are used to calculate the **total number** of adult supervisors required (there must always be at least 2):
- i) Ages 5 and under: One supervisor for every **five** minors. Two qualified adults are required. When additional supervisors are needed they may be drawn from trained young adults (ages 18-20).
 - ii) Ages 6-9: One supervisor for every **seven** minors. Two qualified adults are required. When additional supervisors are needed they may be drawn from trained young adults (ages 18-20).
 - iii) Ages 10-14: One qualified adult for every **eight** minors.
 - iv) Ages 15-18: One qualified adult for every **ten** minors.
 - v) Multi-age Groups: Use the ratio indicated above for the youngest participant.
- c) **Minors as Aides:** Individuals under the age of 21 may not be used in the place of qualified adults. However, in many instances it can be helpful to have underage helpers.
- i) In the interest of protecting adults from accusations and to protect minors from potential maltreatment, helpers under the age 18 must always have a peer-partner if there is a reasonable chance of being alone with an adult or child younger than the helper.
 - ii) To be qualified as an aide, helper or peer-minister, young people under the age of 21 must attend the appropriate training session as provided by the Department of Catholic Education and Lifelong Learning, Diocese of Birmingham.
- 8 **Inappropriate relationships:** Anyone eighteen or over must avoid even the appearance of romantic, dating or sexual relationships with minors.
- 9 **Pornography:** The purchase, download, possession or distribution of child or adult pornography is forbidden.

- 10 **Care Exercised in Private Conferences:** When an adult and a minor engage in a personal or private conference, it must be conducted in view of at least one other responsible individual.
- 11 **Privacy:** Adults must respect the privacy of youth when they are changing clothes or bathing. Adults are to protect their own privacy in the same way.
- 12 **Separate Accommodations:** When staying in hotel-style rooms or tents, minors are not permitted to sleep in the same room or tent with an adult other than their own parent or guardian. Adults and minors may share a large sleeping space (for example, a barracks-style room) as long as the space is readily available to other adults and an adult is never alone with a minor not his or her own child.
- 13 **Preparation for Activities:** Activities must not be undertaken without proper preparation, equipment, clothing, supervision and safety measures. Parents must be fully informed of all details before being asked for consent to participate.
- 14 **Constructive Discipline:** Discipline must be constructive and always reflect Catholic values. Ridicule and humiliation are never appropriate forms of discipline.
- 15 **Hazing Prohibited:** Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited and may not be used.
- 16 **Alcohol:** The use of or presence of alcoholic beverages and/or illegal drugs is prohibited while participating in (or traveling to/from) any child or youth event. No adult shall participate while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- 17 **Proper Training:** Qualified adults must monitor and guide the behavior of youth who act as peer-leaders and ensure that safe environment policies are observed.
- 18 **Counseling:** Adults must not enter into counseling relationships for which they lack professional qualifications.
- 19 **Crisis Situations:** The pastor or his designee must be notified immediately of any crisis involving a minor.
- 20 **Transportation**
 - a) Only passenger vehicles may be used to transport minors. Minors may not be transported on the outside of any vehicle or in truck beds, even if equipped with a camper or other enclosure.
 - b) All vehicles must be good working condition with safety equipment functioning properly.
 - c) All passengers must be seated in approved seats with seat belts. Minors may be transported in a vehicle without seatbelts only if it has been approved for such use by federal or state government.
 - d) Each driver must be at least twenty-one years old and possess a valid, non-probationary driver license appropriate for the vehicle being used.
 - e) Minors must have written parental permission to drive to any event or program. Minors may not drive to events away from parish/school property with passengers other than siblings in the vehicle.
 - f) Each vehicle transporting minors must have current liability insurance to the following minimum limits: \$100,000 per person/\$300,000 per occurrence.

- g) An up-to-date diocesan Driver Information Form (DI-2) must be on file at the parish/school for each driver. The pastor or his designee must approve all drivers.
- 21 **Travel:** (more than 150 miles) – Requires completion and approval of the form “Diocesan Permit to Travel.” Form must be submitted for approval to the Department for Catholic Education and Lifelong Formation, Diocese of Birmingham. Allow at least 14 days for review by the department. Permission must be secured **before** travel takes place.
- 22 **High Risk Activities:** Any event or activity where there is potential for loss of life or serious injury must comply with the current diocesan rules in the document “Guide to Safe Youth Activities” (Diocese of Birmingham). *Examples* of activities in the “high risk” category: Rafting, Canoeing, Swimming, Climbing, Rappelling, Sailing, Deep Water Fishing and Para-sailing, Beach trips, Skiing (snow or water).