



# Code of Conduct for Personnel and Volunteers in the Diocese of Arlington

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## GUIDELINES FOR A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR ADULT INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Catholic Diocese of Arlington (CDA) is committed to providing a safe environment for children and young people within all diocesan activities and ministries. Children are a most precious gift, and all the faithful cooperate in taking every reasonable action to ensure their safety. An important tool in creating safe environments for children is a uniform Code of Conduct. The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to make clear to clergy, employees and volunteers that certain behaviors are unacceptable and to ensure proper monitoring of all youth.

These guidelines apply to all CDA diocesan, parish and Catholic school activities where youth are present.

All adults performing work, ministry or volunteer service within the Church in Arlington are expected to follow these guidelines. Violations of these guidelines are a serious matter and will be investigated and resolved in accordance with diocesan policy.

Those who work with children are serving as stewards of God's precious gift of young life. Keeping this principle in mind will reinforce the need to respect boundaries and to provide an example of a holy life.

## DEFINITIONS

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### A. Adult Volunteer

1. Adult volunteers are defined as those 18 or older who are no longer in high school.
  - 1a. Students who are in high school and have not reached their 20th birthday are to be treated as minors when participating in parish or diocesan activities.
  - 1b. Adult volunteers may not volunteer in their parish's youth ministry program until they reach 21 years of age if they participated in its youth activities as minors.
2. Adult volunteers are not counselors. Their response to situations and conversations by minors may have potential legal implications, and they should, therefore, know their boundaries. The role of an adult volunteer is limited to compassionate listening.
3. For the purpose of this document, all instances denoting requirements and/or guidelines for "adult volunteer(s)" are also binding for all clergy and diocesan personnel.
4. 3a. All references to adults and/or adult volunteers assume that the individual is compliant with all diocesan child protection policies prior to ministry, employment and/or service.



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## B. Chaperone/Supervisor

A Chaperone/Supervisor is defined as an adult volunteer that has oversight or supervisory authority over youth during a diocesan, parish and/or school activity (either on or off campus) whether for occasional or regular activities. These individuals share in the responsibility and authority of the parish or diocesan staff person designated to have oversight of a particular youth event or activity and its leaders.

1a. All Chaperones/Supervisors must be at least 21 years of age.

1b. When determining the appropriate ratio of Chaperones/Supervisors to minors for activities, a husband and wife that have direct supervision over the same group of individuals only count as one Chaperone/Supervisor.

## C. Child

1. For the purposes of this Code, “children,” “child,” “minor,” “youth,” or “young person” is defined to mean any person less than 18 years of age or habitually lacking the use of reason, or still in high school and having not reached his or her 20<sup>th</sup> birthday.

1a. Those who have completed their senior year of high school and would like to participate in youth activities may do so providing:

i. They do not participate in college activities prior to the first day of the Virginia state college schedule.

## D. Social Media

1. Social Media is defined as any form of electronic communication through which a user creates, utilizes, accesses, retrieves and/or visits online communities or systems to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content.

2. For the purposes of this Code, Social Media is to encompass, but is not limited to, all of the following: email, texting, chat rooms, instant messaging, social networks, video messaging, conferencing applications, online message boards, gaming systems, landline and mobile telephones, online voice communications, etc.

2a. In accordance with diocesan policy, as stated in 9.1 and 9.2 of the *Information Security Policy, version 16*,

“9.1 All information and messages that are created, sent, received or stored using diocesan communication assets are the sole property of the Diocese, and no user has any ownership interest or expectation of privacy in such communications. The Diocese retains the right, in its sole discretion, to review all information or



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communications sent, received, stored, or posted using Diocesan communication assets. The Diocese also retains the right to track internet usage and file downloads, for compliance with diocesan policies and for other business reasons.

IT staff will not review the content of an individual user's communications out of personal curiosity or at the request of individuals who have not gone through the proper approval process.

A Department Supervisor must file a request to the Director of Human Resources to have email messages or internet activity reviewed or monitored. The Director of Human Resources will authorize or deny monitoring. If authorized, the HR Director will contact the IT Director to initiate the review/monitoring. The results will be returned to the HR Director.”

2b. The above stated IT policy is updated on a regular basis and the most recent policy edition will apply.

3. Clergy, employees and volunteers who use their own personal account(s) to communicate with minors or their parents/guardians for diocesan, parish and/or school activities subject themselves to the above diocesan policy.

## **FACILITIES**

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### **E. Guidelines for Rectories**

1. Only clergy, seminarians, members of religious institutes or directly-related family members may be overnight guests in rectories.
  - 1a. Only clergy, seminarians, members of religious institutes or directly-related family members may be admitted to personal living spaces within rectories (e.g., priests' personal rooms or suites).
2. When seminarians and/or members of religious institutes stay overnight at the rectory while visiting clergy, the Office of the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy is to be notified when it is an extended stay (i.e., more than one week).
3. Exception: On rare occasions, permission may be granted to allow overnight accommodations to adult male friends, which may include their spouses. In these cases, formal written permission is to be sought, in advance, through the Office of the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy.



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## F. Guidelines for All Other Locations

1. Planned, ongoing meetings with a child may not take place without the knowledge of a parent or guardian and the parish/school administration.
  - 1a. If one-on-one pastoral care of a minor should be necessary, the adult must not meet with the child in isolated environments. The adult will schedule meetings at appropriate times and use public locations that create an environment of transparency and accountability. The adult will also limit both the length and the number of sessions and make appropriate referrals when necessary.
2. Unrelated young persons are not to be in any parish, school, and/or diocesan adult's home without the presence of other non-related responsible adults.
3. An employee/adult volunteer should avoid being alone with a child(ren) in a locker room, restroom, dressing facility or other closed room or isolated area that is inappropriate to a ministry relationship.
4. Normally, youth should not have keys to diocesan, parish and/or school facilities. If they need keys because of employment, they should be carefully interviewed and monitored by an adult supervisor.
5. Facilities must be monitored during all organized activities.
  - 5a. During all activities at which minors are present, adults compliant with the diocesan child protection policies are to be available in the building(s) or location where the activities are taking place and in sufficient proximity to allow monitoring.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

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### G. Behavior of All Adults

1. Any involvement with minors is to be approached from the premise that minors are restricted individuals. They are NOT independent. Hence, all activities involving minors may only occur with the explicit knowledge and consent of a diocesan representative and the child(ren)'s parents and/or guardians. They are subject to specific civil laws in the Commonwealth of Virginia, which may prohibit certain activities.
2. All adults are to abide by the local chain of command and by all custody, safety and emergency protocol and safe-environment procedures established by the sponsoring location, which are supplemental to the Diocesan Policy and Code of Conduct.
3. The possession, sale or use of illegal drugs and/or paraphernalia is strictly prohibited.



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- 3a. A child may never be offered an alcoholic beverage, tobacco, vapes, marijuana, drugs or anything else that is prohibited by law.
- 3b. A child may not distribute, consume or partake of an alcoholic beverage, tobacco, vaping, marijuana, drugs or anything else that is prohibited by law in the presence of an adult on church/school property or at any affiliated event.
4. Adult volunteers may not give significant gifts or grant special privileges or opportunities to a specific child. Even small gifts are not to be given to children without the permission or knowledge of a parent or guardian.
5. Adults may not engage in inappropriate conversations or use inappropriate humor, vocabulary, recordings, films, printed/digital materials or games with minors, particularly if the content is of a sexual nature or is otherwise age and/or developmentally inappropriate.
  - 5a. Showing sexually explicit or pornographic material of any nature to a child is illegal.
  - 5b. Acquisition, possession and/or distribution of child pornography is illegal.
6. Physical contact with another person should be age-appropriate, show respect and kindness, be public and be non-sexual in nature.
  - 6a. Wrestling, tickling and other acts of “horse-play” with a child must always be avoided.
  - 6b. Physical contact when alone with a child should be avoided. Hugging can be an expression of love and respect. However, hugging should always be done in the presence of others and never while alone in a room or behind closed doors.
  - 6c. If a child initiates physical contact, an appropriate, limited response is proper. In all cases it must be respectful and non-sexual.
7. If an adult becomes aware of an inappropriate emotional or personal bond, or a physical attraction between that adult and a young person, the adult should maintain clear professional boundaries between himself/herself and the young person, in addition to consulting with a supervisor.
8. Under no circumstance may an adult engage in the physical discipline of a minor.
  - 8a. It is the policy of the Diocese that corporal punishment of a child is prohibited in all entities under the auspices of the Diocese. However, this prohibition of corporal



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punishment shall not be deemed to prohibit, and the definition of “child abuse” for purposes of this Code of Conduct shall not be deemed to include,

- (i) the use of incidental, minor or reasonable physical contact or other actions designed to maintain order and control;
  - (ii) the use of reasonable and necessary force to quell a disturbance or remove a student from the scene of a disturbance that threatens physical injury to persons or damage to property;
  - (iii) the use of reasonable and necessary force to prevent a student from inflicting physical harm on himself;
  - (iv) the use of reasonable and necessary force for self-defense or the defense of others; or
  - (v) the use of reasonable and necessary force to obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects or controlled substances or paraphernalia that are upon the person of the student or within his control. In addition, the definition of “child abuse” shall not be deemed to include any physical or mental pain, injury or discomfort caused by the foregoing, or which may result from participation in practice or competition in an interscholastic or intramural sport, physical education or an extracurricular activity.
9. If any youth reports feeling uncomfortable with the actions or apparent intentions of an adult volunteer at an activity, this information should be reported to a supervisor immediately.
- 9a. The supervisor must take immediate and appropriate action to ensure the safety of the minor.
- 9b. Any adult volunteer who receives a report involving child abuse or neglect should work with their supervisor to ensure that it is promptly reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) or local law enforcement. Once a report has been made to CPS, the adult volunteer is then to report the incident in writing to diocesan authorities, who may then direct the volunteer or a delegate to report to law enforcement.
10. The supervisor should ensure the adult volunteer has been adequately instructed regarding the expectations for the event. If the adult volunteer is unable or unwilling to meet these expectations, the adult volunteer should be removed.
11. If any adult finds the behavior of any fellow adult or child to be concerning or suspicious, that adult should immediately report the information to a supervisor.



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12. Adult volunteers shall refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages or using marijuana for four hours in advance of a youth event.
13. Adult volunteers shall refrain from using tobacco, vapes, marijuana or consuming alcohol in the presence of children at any in-person or virtual event or activity.
14. Items designed as weapons or that have the appearance of weapons are strictly prohibited.
  - 14a. Some recreational activities or events utilize tools that have the appearance of weapons or may be used as such. Within the context of a particular event, these tools are permitted so long as the youth are appropriately monitored. These tools may include: paintball guns, squirt guns, *Nerf* guns, camping tools (e.g., pocketknife, axe, saw), etc.

## **SPECIFIC GUIDELINES**

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### **H. Guidelines for Chaperones/Supervisors of Children at Group Activities**

1. Chaperones/Supervisors are responsible for reviewing the Diocese of Arlington Code of Conduct and all related guidelines with their supervisor.
2. Two or more adult volunteers compliant with the Diocesan child protection policy must be present for events involving children whether in-person or virtual.
  - 2a. Where feasible, virtual events should be recorded.
  - 2b. In the event that a sufficient number of Chaperones/Supervisors is not available, the event must be cancelled.
  - 2c. The required minimum ratio for Chaperones/Supervisors to children for a day trip:
    - Preschool 1:4
    - Grades K–5 1:6
    - Grades 6–8 1:8
    - Grades 9–12 1:10
  - 2d. The required minimum ratio for Chaperones/Supervisors to children for events lasting more than 12 hours is 1:7.
3. If there is only one adult volunteer driver to transport youth, at least two youth must always be present.
  - 3a. The transport of one minor should only take place if there are two non-related adults in the vehicle.



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- 3b. When possible, drivers should only drop off and pick up youth from a predetermined location that is not at the youth's house.
4. Proper attire: Clothing must always be in keeping with modesty and Christian values. The following guidelines are to be observed:
  - 4a. Underwear is meant to be kept under clothes and generally not to be seen.
  - 4b. Breasts, bellies, and bottoms must remain covered at all times. Swimwear should be modest, e.g., a one-piece or tankini for girls, trunks or jammers for boys.
  - 4c. Shorts and skirts must be no more than 3" above the knee.
  - 4d. Tank tops and skin-tight clothing are not allowed.
  - 4e. Clothing free from inappropriate language or designs including that which is profane; images that depict, advertise or advocate illegal, violent or lewd conduct; or the unlawful possession or use of weapons, drugs, drug paraphernalia, alcohol, tobacco, marijuana or other controlled substances; or is discriminatory or derogatory about the body.
  - 4f. Clothing and/or head coverings free from gang-related or associated symbols, or other words or drawings that could pose a reasonable threat to the health or safety of others are not allowed.

## **I. Off-site Events and Activities**

1. Parental permission, including a signed medical treatment form, must be obtained before taking children to any activities off the parish/school property or event location, even when students are delivered directly to the location.
  - 1a. Employees/Adult Volunteers may not administer medication of any kind without specific, written parent/guardian permission.
  - 1b. A copy of the parental permission and medical form for each young person is to be "in hand" by a Chaperone/Supervisor for all off-site events. An additional copy is to remain at the parish along with a list of all participants at the event.
  - 1c. A good faith effort should be made to provide the appropriate care or assistance to any ill or injured young person in a life-threatening emergency situation Va. Code § 8.01-225(A)(1)).





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2. Young people will be assigned to a specific Chaperone/Supervisor who will monitor and supervise their behavior throughout the event or trip.
  - 2a. Both adults and youth are expected to attend activities with the entire group or assigned small groups.
  - 2b. Adults participating in an event are expected to remain at the event until its conclusion.
  - 2c. Where feasible, separate adult restrooms should be utilized.
3. When sponsored programs occur off-campus, Chaperones/Supervisors will be provided information to review with all youth participants to help familiarize them with the program schedule and facility layout where event activities will take place.
  - 3a. All adults should ensure that the young people understand important safety information.
  - 3b. A specific location must be designated where minors will be able to locate their chaperone or supervisor or where the group will meet at an agreed-upon time.
4. Unrelated adults should not be alone with a child in a sleeping facility, restroom, dressing facility or other closed room or isolated area.
5. During overnight events, special care must be taken to ensure the safety of young people:
  - 5a. If any adult volunteer must enter a sleeping area with young people, a second adult volunteer must be present.
  - 5b. Any interaction with the youth may not be held within the sleeping quarters unless it is a group activity and outside of normal sleeping time, and the location is converted to accommodate the activity.
  - 5c. Under no circumstances shall an unrelated adult share a bed with a child. If an adult must stay in a hotel or other sleeping room with children, the adult must sleep in his or her own bed, using a rollaway, cot or other bedding materials if necessary.
  - 5d. During overnight activities, Chaperones/Supervisors are responsible for establishing and enforcing a curfew. Youth should be afforded the opportunity for at least eight hours of sleep.
  - 5e. Chaperones/Supervisors must check rooms on a regular basis after curfew to ensure that young people are located within and remain in their rooms.



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5f. A Chaperone must be available in a designated location throughout the night. An adult must also be on watch and is responsible for actively monitoring sleeping arrangements throughout the night.

## **J. Photography**

1. Photographs and/or videos of single or specific children may not be taken without the knowledge and permission of a parent or guardian.
  - 1a. Parental permission granted for the photographs or videos of minors must be done in writing utilizing the diocesan forms provided by the Office of Risk Management. This may be done prior to an individual event or annually with renewal each year for an ongoing program.
  - 1b. Adults may never take photographs or videos of children while they are unclothed or dressing.
  - 1c. Showing/sharing pornography and/or explicit or harmful content to/with minors is forbidden.
2. Parental permission must be granted for the publishing of a minor's name and done so in writing prior to publication.
3. Copies of photographs must be available to parents/guardians upon request. Photographs and videos (and any copies) must be deleted upon request of the parent/guardian.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA, COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY**

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### **K. General Guidelines for Social Media**

1. All ministry social networks and communication should be open and transparent.
  - 1a. All ministry social media sites are to be owned or hosted by the diocesan, parish and/or school sponsoring entity. All passwords should be known by the parish and/or school administration and should not be changed without their permission.
2. All clergy must always identify as clergy with the appropriate title in their username and/or profile.
3. Clergy social media accounts are always to be presumed to be ministry accounts and thus to be open and transparent.
4. Personal social media accounts may not be used for ministry communication with minors.



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5. Each ministry that communicates with minors should establish a dedicated account that is used exclusively for ministerial purposes and that may be accessed, monitored and used by more than one unrelated adult volunteer.
6. Use of social media communication for private, one-on-one contact with minors is not permitted.
  - 6a. Applications (e.g., Flocknote, Constant Contact, Mailchimp, Survey Monkey, etc.) utilizing unilateral communication (texting and emailing) from an official account of the organization for announcements and promotions is permitted.
  - 6b. One-on-one or group texting or instant/direct messaging without utilizing an official diocesan, parish or school application is not permitted.
7. All text-based communications sent to or received from young people must be copied to their parent(s)/guardian or an additional adult volunteer/employee. These communications must be kept permanently on file and at the organization location in an easily accessible format.
8. Communication with minors via electronic means is to be restricted to the hours that are appropriate for a phone call to the residence, except in the event of an emergency or to communicate time-sensitive information.
9. Use of cell phones is not permitted during youth events.
  - 9a. Schools may allow the use of cell phones for educational and emergency purposes only.
10. The “tagging” of a minor in a picture or video is prohibited.
  - 10a. If an electronic photograph or video is posted on any ministry site, all names related to minors must be removed unless a release is signed by the parents/guardians.
11. Further advancements in technology may require periodic updates and addenda to this section of the Code of Conduct. The universal principles provided above are to be applied prudently and judiciously in the event an update has not occurred.



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The following is the official receipt denoting that the individual whose signature appears below has received and understands the guidelines contained in the attached document. This sheet will be kept on file at the Office of Child Protection and Safety indefinitely.

Please complete and return to your parish/school location.

I have read and understand the guidelines contained in the Code of Conduct for the Diocese of Arlington. I intend to follow these guidelines and to monitor and protect children and young people in my service to the Church.

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Full Legal Name (Please Print)

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Signature

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Date

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Position/Ministry

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Parish/School/Organization

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Email or Phone Number