



## **Guidelines Concerning all Youth and Student Trips**

### **I. Introduction**

The following *Guidelines Concerning all Youth and Student Trips* has been approved by the Diocese of Venice in Florida and is intended for the Diocesan parishes, schools, and other entities in accord with the *Diocese of Venice Code of Pastoral Conduct for Church Personnel*, Diocesan School Board Manual, and other official documents of the Diocese of Venice.

These guidelines are to be followed by all participants, pastors, school administrators, teachers, DRE's, youth directors, supervisory personnel, chaperones, volunteers or anyone working in an official capacity of the Diocese of Venice in Florida when traveling for day or overnight trips, both inside and outside the Diocese.

Types of events include, but are not limited to, Diocesan, School, and Parish retreats, field trips, sports tournaments, mission trips, pilgrimages, conventions, conferences, and recreational trips.

The Diocese of Venice in Florida requires all official personnel to be at least 21 years of age or older to supervise participants enrolled in any Diocesan school, pre-kindergarten program of education, parish youth group, or religious education program. Siblings, friends, etc. are not defined as participants and cannot attend these activities if they are not registered participants in the above group events. All participants are subject to the supervision of the official Diocesan personnel while attending the activities.

### **II. Authorization**

Trips and other functions must be approved, both for planning and implementation, by the principal in the case of elementary and secondary schools, and by the pastor in the case of parishes. Early notification must be given to the appropriate Diocesan Director for any and all out of state and international trips. Diocesan guidelines for all trips and functions should be observed at all times.

The authorized *Consent, Release of Liability and Indemnification Form for Trips and Events of Diocesan Schools/Youth Outreach/Religious Education Programs* as well as the *Medical Authorization for Minor* forms provided by the Diocese are required for all participants. No authorization is given to those participants who do not submit the proper medical and liability release forms.

Chaperones and supervisory personnel must be provided by the entity at a suggested ratio of no more than 10 participants to 1 adult for groups in grades 7-12, and no more than 5 participants to 1 adult for PreK-6. Chaperones must be gender specific, i.e. if there are

participants of both genders, then there must be chaperones of both genders. All adult chaperones and supervisory personnel must have successfully cleared the background screening requirements of the Diocese of Venice including the educational requirements of Safe Environment Training.

### **III. Requirements for Participants of Different Age Levels**

*Elementary age (Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade)* - Trips are limited to one day in duration with no overnight stay. These trips must have an educational or spiritual component/purpose.

**Middle School age (6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade)** – Trip experiences should include spiritual, educational, or faith building components. The appropriate Diocesan Director should be notified in advance of planning if the trip will be out of state. International travel is not approved for students of middle school age.

**High School age (9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade)** – Trip experiences should include spiritual, educational, or faith building components. The appropriate Diocesan Director should be notified in advance of planning if the trip will be out of state or out of the country. For international travel, it is recommended that students under 16 be accompanied by their parent or legal guardian.

**College age (17 – up)** – Any participant under 18 but in college will be viewed as a minor and must be chaperoned. Any participant over 18 but still attending high school will also be viewed as a minor and must be chaperoned. Any participant who has graduated from high school and is over 18 will be considered an adult, but must adhere to all Diocesan policies and participate in all required group functions while on the trip.

### **IV. Required Forms for Trips**

**Standard Forms:** All participants must have the *Consent, Release of Liability and Indemnification Form for Trips Programs and Events*, the *Authorization for Release and use of Image in Photo, Video Files, or Other Media*, as well as the *Medical Authorization for Minor* forms signed by their parent or legal guardians at the beginning of each year.

**Event Notifications:** All participants must have the *Diocesan Event and Trip Notification* Form signed by their parent or legal guardians for each individual off-campus event/trip.

**For international travel:** Proof of travelers' insurance must be provided, and the *Overseas Medical Authorization for Minor or Adult* as well as the *Overseas Release of Liability and Indemnification* forms must also be signed and returned to the school, parish, or Diocesan entity.

### **V. Transportation**

All non-commercial carrier drivers (including, but not limited to any employee, volunteer, or independent contractor for the Diocese of Venice or for a Parish, School, or Diocesan entity) must be successfully cleared through the FDLE/FBI fingerprinting process without

any restrictions related to driving. Any questions regarding the potential driver's screening should be directed to the Diocesan Human Resources Department by the Pastor or Principal.

**A. Commercial Carrier:**

1. It is preferred and strongly recommended that transportation be commercially provided by licensed and bonded carriers.
2. Transportation of students by commercial carrier is permitted when provided by a licensed commercial carrier under contract with the school, parish, or other Diocesan entity.

**B. Diocesan-Owned School Bus:**

1. Transportation of students is permitted in a diocesan-owned school bus, which for the purposes of this policy, is defined as any motor vehicle designed to transport more than 16 persons, including the driver, and that is used to transport students to and from school or in connection with school activities.
2. If the transportation vehicle, defined as a bus, is provided by a Diocesan entity, school or parish, then the driver must be in compliance with the Diocesan Commercial Driver's License (CDL) policy.
3. All school buses and their operators must meet the requirements of state and federal law with regard to licensure, drug and alcohol testing, equipment and safety specifications, physical examinations, etc.

**C. Diocesan-Owned Passenger Vehicles:**

1. Defined as:
  - A passenger car not to exceed 8 passengers
  - A multi-purpose passenger vehicle (e.g., van, SUV, etc...) designed to transport 10 or fewer persons provided the vehicle meets all federal passenger car standards
  - A van designed to transport 11 to 14 persons provided it meets the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards for School Buses.
2. If the transportation vehicle, other than a bus, is provided by a Diocesan entity, school or parish, the driver must submit to the Principal and/or Pastor a completed Motor Vehicle Report Request Form, and be cleared by Arthur J. Gallagher & Co.

**D. Private Motor Vehicles:**

1. Transportation of students and participants in a privately owned motor vehicle must be approved on a case-by-case basis by the Pastor/Principal. Paid employees of Diocesan entities should not transport participants in their personal vehicles.
2. If the transportation vehicle is provided by volunteers, parents, guardians, chaperones, or any other supervisory personnel (who are not paid by a Diocesan entity), that driver must be 21 years of age or older and must submit to the principal and/or pastor a copy of his/her valid Florida driver's license to be cleared by Arthur J. Gallagher & Co., as well as have proof of current and valid insurance (personal auto liability insurance at the \$100,000/\$300,000 level). A copy of the "declarations page" of the policy must be provided annually to the bookkeeper of each entity and maintained on file.

3. The School, Parish, or Diocesan entity does not provide insurance coverage for teachers, employees, volunteers, parents, guardians, youth directors, chaperones, or any other supervisory personnel who provide approved transportation in privately owned vehicles.

#### **E. Plane, Train, and Boat Transportation**

1. All safety guidelines laid out by official staff of the plane, train, or boat must be followed at all times.
2. It is recommended that participants have travel insurance when traveling by plane, train, or boat.

#### **F. Further Transportation Guidelines:**

1. When more than one vehicle is used to transport participants, all authorized drivers must have written directions and should be familiar with the area in which they will be traveling.
2. On long trips, a relief driver must be available at least every four hours. All drivers should have adequate rest before and after travel.
3. For vehicles traveling with 4 or more minors, there must be at least two adults in each vehicle at all times – one adult to drive and the other to supervise the participants. Both adults must be in compliance with the Diocesan Safe Environment Policy and be cleared to drive pursuant to Diocesan guidelines.
4. Vehicles must not exceed the recommended 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.
6. The use of alcohol, illegal substances, and legally prescribed substances that cause impairment are all prohibited.
7. No smoking is allowed in the presence of participants or in any vehicle.
8. Fifteen and sixteen passenger vans are not allowed to be used as transportation.
9. Cell phones must not be used by the driver while vehicle is in motion.
10. Students are not permitted to travel to or from the field trip destination by means other than with the group unless written requests are made by parents and approved by the teacher responsible for the trip and the principal or Pastor/Administrator.
11. When trips extend beyond the regular school hours, the supervising teacher, youth director or other supervisory person is responsible for students until they are released to parents/guardians.

### **VI. Accommodations**

#### **A. Hotel/Hostel/Motel/Dorm Rooms**

1. Group accommodations must be reserved and confirmed well in advance of an anticipated trip.
2. 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 floor or location in the hotel. There is to be no co-ed sleeping arrangement.
3. Chaperones and supervisory personnel are not to be housed in the same room with participants except for the participant's parent or guardian.

4. No adults (defined as over 18 and out of High School) are to be housed in the same room with a minor (defined as under 18 or still in High School) unless they are siblings.
5. Males and females are not to be housed in the same room unless they are siblings or married adults.
6. All rooms must be checked by the youth directors, chaperones, and supervisory personnel before assigning them to participants to avoid males and females having adjoining doors. Adjoining rooms should only be shared by participants of the same gender.
7. Participants must always be informed and reminded of safety rules and security measures.
8. No participant 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.
9. Participants must never be allowed unsupervised access to the hotel rooms of other participants, youth directors, chaperones, or supervisory personnel.
10. For safety reasons, chaperones and supervisory personnel must have room keys for participants room at all times.

## **B. Other Lodging Requirements**

1. Any priest participant is to room alone.
2. In large dorm situations, chaperones and supervisory personnel may be housed in the same area as participants provided that at least two (2) chaperones/ supervisory personnel are assigned to the dorm. There is to be no co-ed sleeping in this dorm arrangement.
3. In situations where males and females share a common large room (such as a parish hall), a sufficient number of supervisory personnel are to be provided on a rotating schedule to ensure constant supervision. Sleeping areas for males and for females are to be clearly segregated.
4. Chaperones and supervisory personnel are not to use a community shower, nor be in any questionable state of undress in the presence of participants.
5. Changing clothing or showering by participants is not to be monitored by a lone adult supervisor, and never by adults of the opposite sex. More than one adult supervisor must be present during these times. All chaperones and supervisory personnel 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 necessary disciplinary actions are to be carried out after the participant has had the time to be properly dressed, and must take place outside of the changing and bathroom areas.

## **VII. Other Requirements**

1. Youth Directors, chaperones, and supervisory personnel are not allowed to have participants remain over-night at their homes.
2. Underage participants are not permitted to stay overnight in private residences.

3. Volunteer work, service, or events held at a private residence must be approved in advance by the appropriate Diocesan Office.
4. All movies are to be pre-screened and pre-approved by youth directors, chaperones, and supervisory personnel in order to assure that they are age-appropriate and comply with Florida Catholic Conference guidelines.
5. The administering of medicine to participants outside the doctor's office or a health institution is a parental responsibility and should not be delegated except under emergency circumstances. Parents should ask their physicians if it is possible to prescribe medication so that it can be administered to participants at home. The school or the parish can decline to accept a participant for whom medication must be administered since there may not be trained medical personnel on staff. If the school or parish agrees to administer medication, it will be in compliance with the following:

The school or parish will never administer/dispense medicines (including "over the counter" drugs) to participants without specific written authorization by both a licensed physician and the parent. The *Diocesan Authorization for Medication Form* must be completed and submitted by the parent. The name of the medication and dosage must be indicated on this form. Medications to be dispensed by the school or parish must be labeled with the participant's name and the exact dosages. The State of Florida's statutes regarding the administration of medication will be followed.

6. Each child/adult is to wear pajamas that are modest (sweats, shorts & t-shirt, etc.)
7. Priority must be given to ensure that all participants fulfill their Sunday and Holy Day obligations.
8. For work on construction sites, youth are not permitted to operate power tools or do excessively dangerous labor such as roofing, electrical, or plumbing that could expose the participant to sewage. Adult chaperones should always be on site when youth are working and all participants must wear clothing and safety gear that is appropriate for the job.
9. The *Consent, Release of Liability and Indemnification Form for Trips and Events of Diocesan Schools/Youth Outreach/Religious Education Programs* form must be filled out each year and the *Event and Trip Notification* must be filled out for each event within or outside the Diocese. Schools and/or parishes will keep the forms on file for four years. A copy of the forms must be given to the principal, and/or coordinator of the event.

## **VIII. Chaperones and Supervisory Personnel**

**Defined as:** Teachers, DRE's, Youth Directors, Volunteers, Core Team Members, Catechists, etc...

1. Chaperones and supervisory personnel are required to read, to be familiar with, and be in compliance with all Diocese of Venice Safe Environment Policies listed

in the Preamble of the Diocese of Venice Code of Pastoral Conduct for Church Personnel.

2. Required ratios of participants to chaperones are listed under section II, Authorization.

3. All chaperones and supervisory personnel must abide by the following:

- Possession and/or use of weapons is prohibited on Diocesan property, on trips or other functions, and/or while in the presence of youth.
- The use of alcohol, illegal substances, and legally prescribed substances that cause impairment are all prohibited.
- No smoking is allowed in the presence of participants or in any vehicle.

4. The Pastor, Principal, or Supervisor must ensure that all chaperones and supervisory personnel are in compliance with all Diocesan policies.

5. Chaperones and supervisory personnel shall not at any time purchase questionable or illegal items for participants (i.e.: cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, weapons, condoms, and sexually-suggestive materials) and shall confiscate these items when found. If illegal weapons or drugs are confiscated, a police report shall be made and the confiscated items shall be turned over to the police. Parents/Guardians will be called immediately to come and take responsibility for their student who will not be permitted to continue as part of the group, regardless of the event.

6. Chaperones and supervisory personnel are to carry cellular phones on trips for use in case of emergencies.

7. Trip emergency cards for each participant must be provided to the school or parish with the names of the chaperones and supervisory personnel, hotel or lodging name, address, and telephone numbers. The trip leader must also have a copy of these cards.

8. Individual emergency cards must be completed by each participant and kept on their person at all times to document each participant's emergency contact information.

## **IX. International Travel**

1. Prior to planning a trip, the principal, pastor, DRE or youth director should contact the appropriate office of the U.S. Department of State to ascertain that there are no travel restrictions or unusual hazards or concerns in the area(s) to be visited. Thirty days prior to the trip, the principal, pastor, DRE, or youth director shall verify with the Department of State the absence of any constraints on travel to the proposed foreign countries.

2. Proof of travelers insurance must be provided, and the *Overseas Medical Authorization for Minor or Adult* as well as the *Release of Liability and Indemnification* forms must also be signed and returned to the school, parish, or Diocesan entity.

3. Early notification must be given to the appropriate Diocesan Director for guidance and support prior to planning for or advertising any and all out of state and international trips.

## **X. Notification**

1. A detailed list of all participants, chaperones, and supervisory personnel with telephone numbers and emergency contact persons must be left with the school, parish, or entity sponsoring the trip. (See VIII, #7 above)
2. The Pastor/Administrator, principal, and/or appropriate Diocesan Director are to be immediately notified of any major accident or incident during the trip. They will notify the Director of Education who shall immediately notify the appropriate Diocesan offices.
3. Any chaperones or supervisory personnel coming into the Diocese of Venice in Florida for any event must have documented proof that the diocese from which they are coming is in compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Revised Edition*. They must provide proof to the Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator that they have successfully complied with all screening and Safe Environment Training requirements of their diocese.

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