

Employees and volunteers who engage in ministries on behalf of the Church want to teach and guide children and young people as safely and effectively as possible. It does not matter if those in ministry are employees or volunteers, the obligations for providing safe environments are the same. What can we do to assure a safe environment in Catholic churches, schools, and institutions? We can follow the following guidelines.

1. Fulfill the tasks confided to us in a manner that is *respectful* toward others. The pastoral relationship is one that should never be exploited by any minister, employee or volunteer for his or her own benefit. The people we serve have the right to expect that no one will be physically, sexually, or emotionally abused, neglected, or exploited, by Church related personnel.
2. *Be familiar with the Pastoral Code of Conduct of the Diocese of Norwich and abide by its provisions.* Abide by the Diocese of Norwich Electronic Communications, Internet and Computer Use Policy.
3. *Listen attentively* to concerns raised in regard to the *Pastoral Code of Conduct* or compliance with the *Code* and properly address any lack of compliance.
4. It is the goal of all volunteers, official ministers, employees, and contractors to:
 - create and maintain safe environments for minors and adults;
 - ensure that no minor is alone with an adult and no adult is alone with a minor except in emergency situations or during the Sacrament of penance;
 - strive not to place oneself in a vulnerable or unsafe position.

In efforts toward achieving this goal, *adhere to the following principles:*

- A. Two adults must be present when working with children or teenagers. As a rule, both must have read and agreed to abide by the Pastoral Code of Conduct, be aware of and know how to create and/or maintain a safe

environment for children and adults, and have undergone comprehensive screening. If this is not possible, then adults should be paired so that one adult always has the requisite commitment, training, and screening.

- B. All adults on an overnight trip must be screened and trained. Chaperones must be adults over the age of 21 years. The initial one to ten youths should be chaperoned by no less than two adults. For each additional ten youth, there must be at least one additional adult. Chaperones should be in proportion to the gender breakdown of the youth participants attending the event.
 - C. When more than two adults are required by the nature of an activity (e.g., dance, field trip, etc.), adults should be *paired* so that one adult always has the *requisite commitment, training, and screening*.
 - D. When the presence of two adults is not possible, such as medical emergencies, urgent or emergency situations, sacramental confession, or counseling and spiritual direction, *other safe environment measures* should be utilized, such as *remaining visible* to another adult or assuring that the adult involved has the *requisite commitment, training and screening*.
 - E. Adult leaders should *know the location* of the young people confided to their care immediately before, during, and after any Church-sponsored activity.
 - F. When transporting children and/or teenagers, drivers are required to submit to a State of Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles record check, as part of their comprehensive screening. In light of this, it is strongly recommended that professional bus companies be used for transporting minors whenever possible. Policy, forms and procedures can be found in the Diocese of Norwich Comprehensive Screening Policy.
 - G. No Religious Education classes are to take place in private homes.
 - H. No parish activities are to take place in private homes unless safe environments screened and trained chaperones are present. These activities must always be supervised by a screened and trained individual.
- In certain instances, exceptions to the above principles may be granted by the Office for Safe Environments after an application for an exception is placed with this office.
5. *Signed parental consent forms* are a necessity when transporting young people as part of a School or Church group. Similarly, each minor must have a consent form/permission slip signed by his or her parent or guardian to participate in a youth activity.

Any *travel* with an unrelated child (or children) by authorized School or Church-related personnel may only occur when it is part of a School or

Church-sponsored, chaperoned activity, with the express written permission of the young person's parents, when there is a second adult in the same vehicle and when diocesan transportation policies are followed.

6. *Minors ministering to or working with other minors* must be supervised by at least one adult who has the requisite commitment, training, and screening. It is strongly recommended that two adults be present during such activities and/or ministries.
7. *Touching* must be appropriate and initiated by the person being ministered to. In certain very visible situations, age-appropriate touching may be initiated by the minister, such as shaking hands before and after Mass. Otherwise unacceptable behavior does not become acceptable if it is done by a minor to an adult. The adult has the obligation to stop the behavior and counsel the minor as to the proper behavior. The adult must also report any such incident to his/her supervisor.
8. Ministers, employees, and volunteers must refrain from giving, or receiving, *expensive gifts* to, or from, young people without express parental consent.
9. *Under no circumstances* may an unrelated young person *stay overnight* in a rectory.
10. The use of *illegal drugs*, or misuse of over-the-counter or prescription drugs by Church related personnel is strictly prohibited. Church ministers, employees, or volunteers who provide, share, or offer illegal drugs, controlled substances, or alcohol, to young people will be terminated and removed from office or ministry and must be reported to the proper civil and church authorities.
11. *Boundaries* between personal/living space and public space must be clear and maintained at all times. As a rule, personal living space in rectories is not to be used for parish/school ministries or

functions involving minors and/or vulnerable individuals. No religious education classes are to take place in private homes.

12. *Proper behavioral expectations* of minors under age eighteen must be communicated to them prior to the start of the activity.
Private conversations with young people should be considered confidential except insofar as may be necessary to fulfill diocesan and state mandated reporting requirements and/or to protect or save someone's life.
13. *Discipline* in Catholic parishes, schools and institutions should respect the dignity of each child. It is not acceptable to strike, spank, shake or slap a child. When it is necessary to discipline a child, such discipline should be *thoughtful, measured and restrained*.
14. *Visiting lay people* performing any church-sponsored function, at which minors will be present, are to be supervised by a person who is screened and trained according to diocesan safe environment policies.
The parish, school, institution or ministry sponsoring the event will be responsible for assigning a screened and trained individual to the visitor.
It is not necessary to inform the Office for Safe Environments, about the event, unless you wish the office to verify screening and training.
15. In the event of *visiting priests, deacons and seminarians* you must notify the Office of the Vicar for Clergy that a cleric will be visiting the diocese and for what purpose or event, as a Statement of Suitability is required.
16. *Strive to live lives of truth, holiness, and virtue*, treating all human beings as human persons and not as objects for gratification, power, or advancement.



Office for Safe Environments
Diocese of Norwich
199 Broadway
Norwich, CT 06360
OSE@NorwichDiocese.net
860-848-2237 Ext. 212

Revised November 2014

16 Things

Employees and Volunteers Can Do to Help Create and Maintain Safe Environments at Church and at School



"Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Mark 10:14

Diocese of Norwich