

Diocese of Davenport
Electronic Communication With Minors Policy

The following policy and procedures apply to all clerics, adult employees, and adult volunteers of Diocese of Davenport entities. The Diocesan safe environment policies and procedures remain in effect.

Appropriate and ethical communication boundaries must always be observed when communicating with minors including, but not limited to, written communication, electronic communication, the Internet, online services, e-mails, instant messaging, online bulletin boards, social networking sites, social media, text messaging, podcasts, blogs, chat areas, and telephones, including cell phones. Any form of communication that is intended to inappropriately manipulate a minor or that incorporates any suggestive language, suggestive photos, sexual innuendos, inappropriate personal self-disclosures, etc., is forbidden. This includes visual, digital, or electronic communication in any format. Inappropriate and emergency communication must be reported to a supervisor immediately. Chat(s) must only take place so that all those attending the session can view the chat dialogue. Communication to minors should be sent using an organization account and must include a parent or guardian.

Virtual Sessions

Links or connection information for virtual sessions with minors must not be posted online, for example, on websites or through social media. When using Zoom or similar online conferencing platforms, the link to each live session must be shared in advance with a parent or guardian of each minor in the session in addition to the dates, times, and reasons for the sessions. Parents or guardians can join a session at any time but should not contribute to the session unless invited by the instructor/moderator. Each session must also be recorded. The recording must be retained so that it can be reviewed up to 90 days from the end of the session.¹

Session attendance should be limited to those invited by using passwords, passcodes, registration or waiting rooms as part of the invitation. Students must be given the opportunity to join with only an audio connection to the session if the student cannot connect to the session using video.

Sessions should originate from a professional setting such as a classroom or home-office with nothing inappropriate displayed. Everyone on the session should be dressed appropriately. Sessions should occur between 8:00 am and 8:00 pm, but end no later than 9 pm for older minors. The Internet and equipment capabilities of the participants should be considered in order to avoid the need to use cell phones due to connection costs.

No one may enter the session until the instructor/moderator begins the session. A waiting room may be used for participants before the session begins. Everyone should leave the session once the instructor/moderator ends the session.

Questions regarding this policy may be directed to the Diocesan Director of Technology or the Chancellor.

¹ For example, Zoom recording size is 200MB per hour for video which adds up to 1 GB for 5 hours of recording. Free Zoom accounts require storing recordings on a computer hard drive; paid accounts can use cloud storage.