REVIEW OF PUBLICATIONS THAT COMMUNICATE PROGRAM RULES AND POLICIES

Local policy must always be in alignment with the diocesan policies.

Materials used to communicate local and diocesan policies will be reviewed and revised as needed. Such materials will be published and distributed.
COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE YOUTH MINISTRY PROGRAM AND THE PARISH COMMUNITY

Each youth ministry program shall have a plan for communicating the program’s philosophy, mission, policies, and activities to the parish community.
COMMUNICATING PROGRAM RULES AND POLICIES

Each youth ministry program should regularly publish and distribute materials (e.g. handbooks, letters, brochures, handouts, etc.) to assist both the parents and youth in becoming knowledgeable about program rules and policies. The materials should address, but are not limited to, the following items. The materials can cite or include the appropriate diocesan policy.

- child custody issues
- code of conduct
- crisis plan
- dispensing medication
- drug and substance abuse
- harassment
- mission and belief statements
- personally identifiable information release notice
- pregnancy policy
- publishing youth information
- violent acts
- safe environment standards
WEB 2.0; SOCIAL NETWORKING

The policy outlined below should serve as a course of action when considering the use of social networking tools on the Internet.

General Guidelines:

When posting, commenting, or replying to internet sites, it is prohibited to use obscene, harassing, derogatory, defamatory or otherwise potentially scandalous comments, links, and/or images which reflect, discredit, or cause embarrassment to the Catholic Church, Diocese of Columbus, or any person or group of individuals.

Posts, comments, and/or replies must never contradict the teachings of the Catholic Church.

It is prohibited to divulge, without verifiable consent of a parent or guardian, any information that would jeopardize the safety or well being of any person or group of individuals. This includes but is not limited to pictures of any person younger than the age of 18. Also prohibited is the posting of full names, home address, email address, telephone numbers or any information that would allow someone to identify or contact a person younger than the age of 18. Verifiable consent may take the form of a written permission from the parent or guardian. Record of consent must be retained on file until the person turns 18 years of age or the consent is revoked by the parent or guardian.

It is prohibited to disclose in, post, comment, or reply to information that is understood to be held in confidence by the Diocese of Columbus.

Recognition and respect of intellectual property should be maintained at all times. Care must be taken so as not to infringe upon the exclusive rights of others, musical, literary and or artistic works. It is the responsibility of the individual to abide by all copyright laws of the United States of America.
Enforcement
Failure to comply with any of the guidelines and provisions outlined here will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination. The Department for Education reserves the right to change this policy at any time and at its discretion. The interpretation and administration of this policy will be made by diocesan officials in light of changing circumstances and events.

Distinguishing between Ministry and Personal Websites:
A ministry website (MW) is a web presence created for the sole purpose of ministry for the Department for Education. This includes but is not limited to class/course, athletic, and student activity sites. Before these sites are created, permission must be obtained from the office director or administrator. If the site involves the participation of students or children, and the participation requires a username and password, the same access must be provided to child’s parent or guardian. The Department for Education must be informed of the existence of any related website and be provided a password that enables the office to view the site.

A personal website (PW) is a web presence created to share personal communication with friends and associates. Granting access to these sites by (unrelated) children is prohibited. Accessing personal websites during work hours is prohibited. The Department for Education reserves the right to review an employee’s personal website if there are reasonable grounds for believing the guidelines are being violated.

Web 2.0 Components

Second Life - Second Life is a massive multi-player universe (MMU) set in a 3D virtual world. (MW) It is prohibited to create a second life environment within or as a standalone ministry website without prior permission of the Department for Education. (PW) Creation and/or participation in second life sites must follow the general guidelines listed above and be consistent with the tenants of the Catholic Church.

Wikis -
- A wiki invites all users to edit any page or to create new pages within the wiki web site, using only a (general) web browser…¹
- A wiki seeks to involve the invited user in an ongoing process of creation and collaboration that constantly changes the Web site landscape.¹

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(MW) The creation of wikis should be limited to those situations which encourage dynamic participation and collaboration in the creation of a site that addresses a specific and pre-defined purpose. All wikis should be closed to the general public and serve only a pre-defined group.

(PW) Creation and/or participation in wikis must follow the general guidelines listed above and be consistent with the tenants outlined in diocesan safe environment policies.

Photo (Video) Sharing - Photo sharing is the publishing or transfer of a user's digital photos online, thus enabling the user to share them with others (whether publicly or privately). This functionality is provided through both websites and applications that facilitate the upload and display of images. The term can also be loosely applied to the use of online photo galleries that are set up and managed by individual users, including photoblogs and Youtube.

(MW) Photo sharing should be limited to those images that are directly associated with the purpose of the ministry, i.e. field trip photos, facility photos, etc. Photos of individuals or small groups of individuals should be uploaded or displayed only with verifiable consent.

(PW) Creation and/or participation in photo (video) sharing sites must follow the general guidelines listed above and be consistent with the tenants outlined in diocesan safe environment policies. Any images deemed inappropriate, independent of when they were made, must be removed. Sharing images on a personal site that were created for a ministry website is prohibited. All available privacy settings should be enabled.

Blogs - A blog is a website where entries are written in chronological order and commonly displayed in reverse chronological order.

(MW) Blogs are permitted as long as they are kept current and maintained on a regular basis. They are to be used as a means of sharing information (not opinions). The allowing of comments is permitted only if they are reviewed and approved by the moderator before they are posted. Comment moderation can be very time consuming and requires forethought by the individuals and their administrators impacted by this decision.

(PW) Creation and/or participation blog sites must follow the general guidelines listed above and be consistent with the tenants outlined in diocesan safe environment policies. If comments are permitted, the user must review the site daily so as to not allow violation of the guidelines by others. The employee is required to put the following notice in a reasonably prominent place on the site:

“*The views expressed on this website are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer.*”

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(Continued on next page.)
Podcast - A podcast is a digital media file, or a series of such files, that is distributed over the internet using syndication feeds for playback on portable media players, and personal computers. A podcast is a specific type of webcast which, like “radio,” can mean either the content itself or the method by which it is syndicated; the latter is also termed podcasting.

(MW) Podcasts are permitted when they are in compliance with the general guidelines established by the Diocese of Columbus.
(PW) Creation of podcasts must follow the general guidelines listed above and be consistent with the tenants outlined in diocesan safe environment policies.

Social Networking – refers to a website(s) in which users can add individuals as “friends” and send them messages and update their profiles to notify “friends” about themselves. Additionally, users can join networks organized by workplace, school, or college. Facebook allows anyone who declares themselves to be aged 13 or older to become a member of the website.

Social networking websites allow users to create and customize their own profiles with photos, videos, and information about themselves. “Friends” can browse the profiles of other friends and write messages on their pages.

As is the case with Facebook, the profile has a "wall" where friends can post comments. Because the wall is viewable by all the user's friends, wall postings are basically a public conversation. Therefore, it is usually best not to write personal messages on your friends' walls. Instead, you can send a person a private message, which will show up in his or her private inbox, similar to an e-mail message.

Facebook provides an easy way for friends to keep in touch and for individuals to have a presence on the Web without needing to build a website. Facebook allows each user to set privacy settings.

It is incumbent upon employees of the diocese who consider using this type of web presence to learn of the limitations and security risks inherent in this type of site. Recent concerns of Facebook include but are not limited to:

1. Personal information is being shared with third parties;
2. Privacy settings revert to a less safe default mode after each redesign;
3. Facebook ads may contain malware;
4. An individual’s friends unknowingly make you vulnerable;
5. Scammers are creating fake profiles.
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(MW) Prior to the development of a social networking page, written approval must be obtained from the administrator or office director, whichever is appropriate. Final approval must be given from the Episcopal Moderator for Education. The Episcopal Moderator for Education must be informed of the existence of any Ministry Website and provided a password that enables her office to view the site.

So as to provide timely response and adequate management of the posts, comments, and replies there should be two adult non-related employees appointed to moderate the site.

Note: Before social networking sites are employed, the time required for maintenance must be considered since social networking sites are blocked in schools and the Department for Education. Maintenance needs to be accomplished off-site.

(PW) The Diocese expects its employees to exercise due diligence before entering into a social network. Text, images and/or video may be misconstrued when taken out of context. All of the general guidelines of this policy must be adhered to on personal websites. It should be noted that when dealing with youth as a profession, it is not uncommon for unintentional consequences to arise from what is thought to be harmless and comical actions. Employees are cautioned to evaluate their postings carefully and never consider them to be exclusive to their closed group of friends. Should material that was meant to be confidential become public by any means, the employee is still subject to the enforcement cited in this document.

Note: Twitter – falls under a different category… It is designed as a means of communicating to a group of people quickly. A “tweet” does not facilitate nor expect a response. If school personnel wishes to use twitter, they may only send messages that pertain to adults or currently registered students.

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Adopted 11/10
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PUBLIC RELATIONS PROCEDURES

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

As a general rule, pastors and coordinators of youth ministry are responsible for routine public relations for their programs. Exceptions to this rule include matters relating to diocesan actions or decisions.

Examples of matters to be handled by the diocese are:

1. Decisions or actions by the bishop, episcopal moderator for education, diocesan director of youth and young adult ministry, or the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

2. Decisions or actions of diocesan task groups and committees.

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

The diocesan director of youth and young adult ministry will be informed by the pastor or coordinator of youth ministry as soon as facts indicate a potential or actual public relations problem. (If the diocesan director of youth and young adult ministry or episcopal moderator for education is not available, the pastor or coordinator of youth ministry will contact the diocesan Communications Office directly.)

The Communications Office is solely responsible for providing any public statements or releases in crisis situations.

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Adopted 2/03
Revised 9/08
OUTSIDE SPEAKERS

Coordinators of youth ministry must consult with and receive approval from the pastor (or his representative) before inviting an outside speaker to a program.

The pastor (or his representative) will obtain a letter from the outside speaker’s home diocese stating that the speaker is in compliance with that diocese’s safe Environment policies.

If two or more parishes are co-sponsoring an outside speaker or speakers, the pastors (or their representatives) must consult with the Director, Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry (OYYAM) before issuing the invitations. The OYYAM Director will forward the speaker request to the Bishop for final approval.

In their presentations, all Catholic speakers must accept and honor the teachings of the Catholic Church. A non Catholic speaker is welcomed but care must be taken that such speaker does not speak contrary to Catholic practice and doctrine.

The pastor (or his representative) and coordinator of youth ministry are responsible for guests who visit a program and speakers who address youth, either individually or in a group.
## RELATIONS WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY AGENCIES: FIRE DRILLS

1. The State Fire Marshall strictly urges that fire drills in buildings be of a surprise nature. A record of the drills shall be kept by the coordinator of youth ministry.

2. When the fire alarm is sounded, everyone in the building shall leave.

3. As soon as the coordinator of youth ministry is certain that all youth have left the room, the coordinator of youth ministry shall close the doors as he/she leaves.

4. The youth shall walk. Talking shall not be permitted as the youth leave the building.

5. The coordinators of youth ministry shall move to predesignated positions at a safe distance from the building.

6. As soon as the youth are stationed, the coordinator of youth ministry shall take a count of all youth present.

7. The coordinator of youth ministry or a person delegated by the coordinator of youth ministry shall stand near the main entrance of the building. As quickly as the count is made, the coordinator of youth ministry shall be notified that all youth have been accounted for. If a youth is missing, that information shall be relayed to the coordinator of youth ministry.

8. When the first fire company arrives, the coordinator of youth ministry will inform them as to whether or not all youth have been accounted for. If a youth is missing, the coordinator of youth ministry will notify the officer and tell him/her in what part of the building the youth is likely to be.

9. Youth shall be trained to use an alternate exit route in case the regular route is blocked.

10. Handicapped youths shall be cared for by some designated responsible person.

11. Every unplanned sounding of the fire alarm must be reported to the Fire Department, by telephone, immediately, to get the fire fighters to the building.
All drivers and vehicles used for transporting young people must be in full compliance with the policies set forth in the Diocesan Financial Policy Manual. All drivers must also be in full compliance with diocesan safe environment policies.
FIELD TRIPS

A field trip is defined as a parish sponsored activity supervised by parish personnel and/or adult volunteers which occurs off site.

No youth may participate unless a signed parent permission form for the specific event is received by the parish prior to the field trip. A standardized permission form is available from the diocese.

Whenever possible, bus transportation should be provided. If a private passenger vehicle is used, all drivers and vehicles must be in full compliance with the Diocesan Financial Policy Manual.
OVERNIGHT TRIPS

Trips taken by groups of youth which extend during the evening and require staying overnight are subject to the approval of the pastor or his representative.

Approval may only be given when such an event supplements or enriches parish programs, e.g. retreat experiences, youth conferences, etc.

The directives in Policy 6153.0 - Field Trips also apply to overnight trips.
GROUP TRAVEL

Tour promoters are required by law to register with the Ohio Secretary of State and to furnish a bond or other performance guarantee before commencing business in the state. Coordinators of youth ministry must obtain a copy of the promoter’s registration from the Ohio Secretary of State before permitting youth to enroll in any travel programs offered.

All group travel is subject to the approval of the pastor or his representative.
ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL PROCEDURES

All accounts and financial procedures must be in full compliance with the policies set forth in the Diocesan Financial Policy Manual.
PARISH YOUTH MINISTRY FACILITIES

The parish’s youth ministry facilities shall support the diocesan philosophy and goals of youth ministry, and promote a healthy formation of Catholic youth. All youth ministry programs shall be held in suitable locations appropriate for parish activities.

All facilities in full compliance with the policies set forth in the Diocesan Financial Policy Manual.
For the purpose of this policy, “drugs” shall mean:

1. Any drug of abuse as defined in Ohio Revised Code §3719.011 (which includes any controlled substance, any harmful intoxicant and any dangerous drug as those terms are further defined in the Ohio Revised Code);
2. All alcoholic beverages;
3. All tobacco products;
4. Any prescription or patent drug, except those for which permission to use in program has been granted;
5. Anabolic steroids;
6. Cocaine, crack cocaine, LSD, hashish, opiates, narcotic drugs and marihuana;
7. Any substance that is a “look-alike” to any of the above, or is a counterfeit controlled substance as defined in Ohio Revised Code §2925.01(O).

(See policy 5141.0 regarding prescribed medication)

The term “drug paraphernalia” shall have the meaning set forth in Ohio Revised Code §2925.14(A).

Parishes are encouraged to develop drug prevention programs that:

a. Emphasize the prevention of drug use;
b. Provide for a comprehensive, age appropriate, developmentally-based alcohol and other drugs education and prevention program;
c. Include a clear statement that disciplinary sanctions as determined by the parish, will be imposed on program participants who violate the program standards of conduct and a description of those standards;
d. Provide information about alcohol and other drug counseling and rehabilitation programs available to youth and their parent(s) and or guardian(s).

The use, possession, concealment, manufacture, administering, dispensing or distribution of any drug or drug paraphernalia, or committing any “drug abuse offense” as defined in Ohio Code §2925.01, or appearance while under the influence of any drug, on parish premises, in vehicles used to transport to a youth ministry event, or at any youth ministry sponsored event is prohibited.
Anyone who is committing any act prohibited by this policy shall be brought to the attention of the pastor or the pastor’s designated representative.

The pastor or representative shall place student safety as a priority in each situation. The pastor or representative shall notify this youth’s parent(s) or guardian(s) immediately.

The youth ministry program policy shall address prevention, intervention, and treatment. Youth ministry programs shall develop local policies regarding the consequences of the use, concealment, or distribution any drug or drug related paraphernalia. These policies shall include the consequences for first time and repeat offenders. The first time offender is required to meet with his/her parent(s) or guardian(s) and parish officials.

Any reference to an Ohio Revised Code section in this policy shall also refer to any subsequent Ohio statute of like tenor and effect.
ADMINISTERING MEDICATIONS TO YOUTH

A youth using prescribed medication during a youth ministry activity must have on file a signed medical authorization form from the parent or guardian, and a properly completed physician’s statement. The authorization must include the following:

1. Written permission from the parent (s) or guardian (s).
2. A physician’s verification of the necessity for the medication; name of medication; dosage; times or intervals at which it is to be taken; duration; and possible side effects.
3. Medication must be in original containers and have affixed label including youth’s name.
4. Accurate records of the medication given must be kept filed.
5. A statement releasing and holding parish personnel harmless from any and all liability for damages or injury resulting directly or indirectly from the presence of the medication during the activity or its use by the youth.

The possession or use of non-prescription, over-the-counter medication during activities is discouraged. Administration of these medications (i.e. throat lozenges, acetaminophen drugs…such as Tylenol and Datril) should be determined on the local level, if the parish determines that adequate team members are available, and as long as appropriate permission forms are on file. The parish will not administer aspirin to youth because of its connection to Reye’s Syndrome.

Coordinators of youth ministry are permitted to administer prescribed medication to a youth when conditions exist, which in the judgment of the coordinator, merit giving assistance to the youth (e.g., immaturity of the youth, nature of the medication). Coordinators of youth ministry are not required to administer medication to students.

At the discretion of the pastor, the coordinator of youth ministry may require that medication be kept by youth ministry team members until the youth needs to use it.
ADMINISTRATION

TEEN PREGNANCY

Given our current circumstances, it is possible that a participant in a parish youth ministry program may face the challenges related to teen pregnancy.

Any determination concerning the continuing participation in youth ministry activities by a pregnant youth shall be made by the youth and their parents in consultation with the youth minister and pastor. Written notice of a doctor’s determination concerning participation shall be provided upon request to the coordinator of youth ministry.

The religious instruction given in a youth ministry program should make clear that any act involving procreation is the exclusive right of those who are married. Likewise, catechesis on the Church’s consistent stand in defense of human life must also be incorporated.

If, in the case of an unmarried youth, the youth ministry team has an attitude of compassion rather than approval, and if the youth ministry program offers appropriate religious instruction, there is every reasonable hope that the attitude of the youth participants will, likewise, be a rational and Christian one.

At this time in their lives, youth involved in a pregnancy need Christian acceptance, compassion and counsel. It is the Christian community’s responsibility to give support and aid to those involved. Professional counseling for the expectant parents is strongly recommended.
AIDS

The Diocese of Columbus recognizes that AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) and/or symptomatic or asymptomatic infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a life-threatening disease and a major health issue. The epidemic proportions of this disease prompted the diocese to adopt a policy which seeks protection of the rights and welfare of all students and staff.

Attendance

In keeping with the recommendations of the Surgeon General’s Report each case of a youth with HIV/or AIDS shall be dealt with individually. Youth who are diagnosed as having HIV/or AIDS remain in the normal youth ministry program as their illness allows.

Confidentiality

The Diocese recognizes the dignity and rights of all persons and is sensitive and responsive to the concerns of those who have HIV/or AIDS. Information concerning the health of any youth with HIV/or AIDS shall be treated as confidential.

Procedure

Because adolescents with HIV/or AIDS are highly susceptible to infections from other youth, the Surgeon General’s report recommends that the program involve an AIDS evaluation team in the medical evaluation of infected students. The report further recommends that the youth’s physician, a public health official (or physician specializing in factious diseases) and the youth’s parent (s) or guardian (s) collaborate with the designated program officials (pastor, coordinator of youth ministry, and appropriate youth ministry team members) in conducting the evaluation. Based upon the recommendations of the evaluation team, the program’s administration shall permit the student to remain active in youth ministry events under restricted conditions.