



Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana Social Networking / Technology Directives

Background:

“The new digital technologies are, indeed, bringing about fundamental shifts in patterns of communication and human relationships. The desire for connectedness and the instinct for communication that are so obvious in contemporary culture are best understood as modern manifestations of the basic and enduring propensity of humans to reach beyond themselves and to seek communion with others. In reality, when we open ourselves to others, we are fulfilling our deepest need and becoming more fully human. Loving is, in fact, what we are designed for by our Creator.” Pope Benedict XVI, Message for the 43rd World Day of Communications

The National Directory for Catechesis further states that, “using the media correctly and competently can lead to a genuine inculturation of the Gospel” (NDC 21). Keeping these ideas in mind, the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana has established the following Social Networking / Technology Guidelines for parish leaders in all capacities, especially those working with youth either in a paid or Volunteer position. The following guidelines for each section will be prefaced with ‘Guiding Principles’ for implementation.¹

Definitions:

The Diocese – The Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana.

Minor – An individual who HAS NOT yet reached his or her 18th birthday.

Adult – An individual who HAS reached his or her 18th birthday.

Church Organization – Any official group of the Diocese or a parish or school within the Diocese, including parishes, schools, and the Diocese itself.

Staff – An individual who is paid by a Church Organization.

Volunteer – An individual who assists a Church Organization but receives no compensation for his or her service other than reimbursement of direct expenses.

Messaging – Electronic text based communication, including but not limited to email, instant Messaging, or texting.

Scope:

The following policy supplements current policies on the given areas in the Protocol for Adults Working with Minors in place prior to the promulgation date of March 1, 2011. These policies apply to each of the technologies addressed regardless of the manner in which the technology is accessed (e.g. computer, phone, pda, etc.) and regardless of ownership of equipment used for such access (Church Organizational or personal.) There may be additional supplemental policies for specific roles or organizations that further direct use of these technologies.

¹ The guidelines of the Local Church are compiled and revised from the document *Recommended Technology Guidelines for Pastoral Work with Young People*, Draft 5- May 27, 2010 for Catholic dioceses, parishes, schools, and organizations, ©2010, National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry. Used with permission.



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Church Organization Websites:

Guiding Principles:

A Church Organization website is an internet website / tool created by Staff or Volunteers for the primary purpose of furthering the ministry of the Church Organization and conducting related Church Organization business.² Such websites generally inform individuals about the resources, ministries, and events of a Church Organization. The guidelines below represent ways to ensure the safe and effective transmission of a Church Organization's mission.

Diocesan Directives:

1. Church Organizations should make every effort to establish an organizational website and commit to regularly updating the content.
2. The official organizational logo or standard images should appear on the site to distinguish it as the organization's official site, and not that of a specific person.
3. Website content should consistently represent the views / teachings of the Catholic Church as interpreted by the Bishop and pursuant to Canon Law.
4. Written permission (from the parents or legal guardians of Minors) **must** be obtained prior to posting photographs, or other personally identifiable information of Minors on the organization's website. When posting photographs of Minors, it is advisable to caption the photographs using only the individuals' first name unless the parent agrees to listing the surname.
5. A minimum of two Adults functioning with an official organizational capacity should have full access to all organizational accounts / sites. Any individuals with full access to organizational accounts / sites shall refrain from sharing passwords or account information with anyone, including trusted friends or family members.
6. Church Organizations shall ensure that reasonable technical and physical security measures are in place to prevent unauthorized access to organizational accounts / sites.
7. Prior written consent **must** be obtained before posting on any public website personal photographs or personal information of Staff, Volunteers, or Minors including, but not limited to, family pictures, social events, home phone numbers / addresses, and personal e-mail accounts.
8. Communication with visitors to the site (other than via the website itself) should be done through official organizational e-mail, if provided.
9. All websites **must** comply with applicable local, state, and federal laws.
10. All websites shall be subject to diocesan approval and control and to such other diocesan procedures, policies, and instructions as may be adopted from time to time.
11. All websites shall respect the intellectual property rights of others. Making unauthorized copies of licensed software or copyrighted material is prohibited.

² USCCB "Social Media Guidelines", <http://www.usccb.org/comm/social-media-guidelines.shtml> June 2010



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Social Networking Websites:

Guiding Principles:

Social media are the fastest growing form of communication in the United States, especially among Minors and Young Adults.³ The guidelines below provide direction to allow parish personnel to connect with and minister to all people using new forms of media and to ensure that use of social media protects the safety of all people.

Diocesan Directives:

1. Adult Staff and Volunteers are encouraged to establish separate sites and pages for personal and professional use, if possible. However, all material on the internet should be presumed to be public and nothing should be posted that one considers being truly private.
2. Staff and Volunteers utilizing social networking sites, either for ministerial or personal use, should always bear in mind that they represent the Catholic Church in all interactions at all times. Staff and Volunteers should avoid any use of such resources in a manner that could reflect negatively on the Catholic Church. Such may include mention of inappropriate use of alcohol, advocacy of inappropriate music / movies, inappropriate language, inappropriate dress, or the expression of opinions that are contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church as interpreted by the Bishop and pursuant to Canon Law.
3. Parents or legal guardians of Minors **must** be informed that a social networking site is being utilized as a part of the Church Organization. Parents or legal guardians should be informed of their own responsibility to monitor and restrict the use of social networking, as with any of the internet, by their Minors.
4. Be aware of terms of use, age restrictions, and privacy options and controls for each site prior to establishing a Church Organization presence.
5. For official organizational presence, as with a website, a minimum of two Adults functioning with a Church Organization should have full administrative access to the accounts / sites. Both Adults should be registered to have e-mail alerts of page activity sent to their official organizational e-mail addresses, if provided. This allows for a quicker response time to urgent requests and helps to ensure that all postings are appropriate. Any individual with full access to organizational accounts / sites shall refrain from sharing passwords or account information with anyone, including trusted friends or family members.
6. There is a major difference between initiating a 'friend request' and accepting one. Friend / connection requests should be initiated by the Minors, not the Adult from a Church Organization.
7. As with a website, written permission (from the parents or legal guardians of Minors) **must** be attained prior to posting photographs, or other personally identifiable information of Minors on the organization's social networking presence. When posting photographs of Minors, it is advisable for Adult Staff and Volunteers to caption using only the individuals' first name unless the parent agrees to listing the surname or "tagging" of the picture.

³USCCB "Social Media Guidelines" <http://www.usccb.org/comm/social-media-guidelines.shtml> June 2010



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8. No expectation should be made that social networking sites will be checked regularly for crisis situations. However, a plea for help that goes unanswered is dangerous for Minors and their families and can be legally damaging to the Church Organization. Any suspected crisis or emergency message should be treated the same as in any other form of communication.
9. The official organizational logo or standard images should appear on the Church Organization site to distinguish it as the organization's official site, and not that of a specific person.
10. The Church Organization should create and post a 'code of conduct' for users and visitors that connect through social media networks.
11. All use of such sites **must** comply with applicable local, state, and federal laws.
12. All use of such sites shall be subject to diocesan approval and control and to such other diocesan procedures, policies, and instructions as may be adopted from time to time.
13. All use of such sites shall respect the intellectual property rights of others. Making unauthorized copies of licensed software or copyrighted material is prohibited.

Messaging:

Guiding Principles:

Prudent judgment should always be used with text based communication tools. As with verbal communication, some individuals may misunderstand or misinterpret meaning and emotion. These guidelines provide specific methods to help avoid inappropriate communication or miscommunication with those ministering to the faithful.

Diocesan Directives:

1. If a Church Organization provides Messaging facilities for organizational activities and associated administrative functions supporting its mission and ministry, such Messaging facilities should be used only for Church Organizational purposes. Any use of such Messaging facilities that interferes with Church Organizational activities and functions or does not respect the mission, image and reputation of the Church is improper.
2. Parents should be informed of the use of Messaging for communication purposes with Minors, and that it is a standard part of youth ministry.
3. Staff and Volunteers should maintain separate e-mail accounts for professional / Church Organization and personal communications.
4. The same boundaries observed in oral / personal communication should be adhered to when communicating via Messaging. Avoid engaging in any postings / communications that could be misconstrued or misinterpreted. Messaging can be logged, archived, and forwarded to other parties.



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5. Clear guidelines or parameters should be established with regard to times of communication between Adults and Minors. While Minors may be on the phone / texting in the late evening hours, Staff and Volunteers who minister with Minors should pre-determine a timeframe when it is too late to take a Church Organizational message or call, except in the case of serious urgency.
6. If provided, use a Church Organizational e-mail account when communicating Church Organizational business, not home or personal accounts.
7. Communications should be professional and rendered on behalf of the Church Organization to Minors.
8. Messaging should only be used with the subjects that deal with matters appropriate to one's Church Organizational relationship.
9. Care should be taken to maintain professionalism and appropriate boundaries in all communication. Do not overstep the boundaries of Adult / Minor relationships.
10. Avoid any communication which might be construed as having sexual overtones. Do not reply to any such Messaging received from Minors; instead, make and keep a copy of any such inappropriate communication and notify an administrator / pastor / supervisor.
11. Write as though others will read what is written. Messages may easily be shared or forwarded with Minors and others.
12. There is no such thing as private Messaging when using Messaging facilities provided by a Church Organization or when Staff or Volunteers are engaged in Church Organization activities. All such communications are public in nature, and the Diocese reserves the right to inspect, copy, store or disclose the contents of Messaging when appropriate to prevent or correct improper use of Messaging facilities or ensure compliance with Diocesan policies, procedures or regulations, satisfy a legal obligation, or ensure the proper operations of Diocesan e-mail facilities. Ask, "If my bishop / pastor / principal wanted to see this communication, would I be embarrassed by what I have written?" If the answer is 'yes', do not send the message.
13. Messaging can be misinterpreted. Always double check messages to see if someone reading it might read something into it that is not intended or if your message might be misinterpreted.
14. In addition to the foregoing guidelines, the following specific actions and use of Church Organization Messaging facilities are improper:
 - a. Concealment or misrepresentation of names or affiliations in Messaging.
 - b. Alteration of source or destination address of any Messaging.
 - c. Use of Messaging for commercial or private business purposes that have not been approved.
 - d. Use of Messaging for organized political activity or political solicitation.
 - e. Use of Messaging to harass or threaten other individuals.
 - f. Use of Messaging that degrades or demeans other individuals.



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Blogging:

Guiding Principles:

A blog (contraction of 'web log') is a type of website, usually maintained by an individual, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are typically displayed in reverse chronological order.⁴ These guidelines clarify the ministerial use of blogs and safety precautions for those utilizing blogs in church ministry.

Diocesan Directives:

1. Professional, ministry based blogs should only be utilized to promote upcoming events or programs and for the purpose of evangelization and providing resources / information for the Church Organization. Such blogs should not be used to conduct or promote outside business and /or personal activities and should not divulge any personal information regarding those to whom ministry is being given.
2. Blogs by their nature are public. No Adult Staff or Volunteer working with Minors should maintain a public personal blog inappropriate for Minors.
3. On an organizational blog, as in all professional / ministerial settings, posted information, opinions, references, and resources should reflect and be consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church as interpreted by the Bishop and pursuant to Canon Law. Communications should be professional and rendered on behalf of the Church Organization to one's audience.
4. Blogs are an efficient method for disseminating fliers for upcoming activities, permission / consent forms, calendars, and ministerial updates.
5. Other possible uses include: posting links and references for faith formation; communicating sacramental preparation information or parent resources; communicating daily Scriptures passages, prayers, or spiritual links / resources.
6. If Minors are to engage in blogging as a part of an officially sanctioned organizational activity, such activity **must** be monitored by at least two Adults.
7. As with a website, written permission (from the parents or legal guardians of Minors) **must** be attained prior to posting photographs, or other personally identifiable information of Minors on the organization's blog. When posting photographs of Minors, it is advisable for Adult Staff and Volunteers to caption using only the individuals' first name unless the parent agrees to listing the surname or "tagging" of the picture.
8. The content posted by Adult Staff and Volunteers of an organizational blog **must** be in compliance with Catholic Church teaching and values as interpreted by the Bishop and pursuant to Canon Law.

⁴ USCCB "Social Media Guidelines" <http://www.usccb.org/comm/social-media-guidelines.shtml> June 2010.



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Online Video and Chat Rooms

Guiding Principles:

Multimedia provides a unique method in ministry. Dynamic websites, ones that include various forms of media e.g. graphics, flash animation, streaming video, are rapidly replacing static, text only websites. These guidelines represent safe and effective practices for online video and chat rooms.

Diocesan Directives:

1. Streaming video may be used for education, communication, and promotional purposes consistent with the ministry of the Catholic Church. Any use of live streaming video or chat rooms that leads to, supports, or encourages exclusive Minor-Adult relationships is prohibited.
2. One-on-one communication with a Minor over the internet should be bound by the standards expected in general of one-on-one communication with a Minor (e.g., interruptible, etc).
3. When presenting personal opinions and engaging in chats / discussions, it is essential for Staff and Volunteers to remember that even on the World Wide Web, others may recognize them as an official representation of the values of the Catholic Church.
4. All use of online video and chat rooms **must** comply with applicable local, state, and federal laws.
5. All use of online video and chat rooms shall be subject to diocesan approval and control and to such other diocesan procedures, policies, and instructions as may be adopted from time to time.
6. All use of online video and chat rooms shall respect the intellectual property rights of others. Making unauthorized copies of copyrighted material is prohibited.
7. Written permission (e-mail or signed staemtne) must be secured in order to record and / or stream (or podcast, etc) speakers, preachers, classroom teachings, meetings, prayer or worship, social events, liturgical surroundings, etc.

Registration Technologies and Securing Private Information:

Guiding Principles:

Protecting the identity and personally identifiable information of those served by schools, parishes and other organizations is of utmost importance. These guidelines provide methods to ensure that any secure communications have proper documentation and protection, particularly those of a financial nature.

Diocesan Directives:

1. If the explanation of these technologies and the recommendations of accompanying them are beyond the technical competence of the webmaster or Staff person responsible for registration



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forms, that should be taken as a sign that the parish or organization should NOT be creating such forms. Those leaders should contact a technology / web solution provider for assistance.

2. Leave the creation and management of secure web forms to a qualified web solution provider unless you understand the demands of secure transmissions and can assure that your website can accommodate such security.
3. No sensitive or personally identifiable information defined for purposes of this policy to include without limitation financial information (credit card numbers, checking account numbers) and secure identifiers (e.g. data or information that can be used to identify a person, such as their name, family members' names, their address, a personal identifier such as a social security number, an e-mail address, a student ID number or telephone, a list of personal characteristics, date of birth, or any other information that would make the individual's identity easily traceable) should ever be transmitted through e-mail, web pages that convert form information into e-mail, or web forms using regular hypertext transmission (<http://> pages).
4. No sensitive or personally identifiable information should be transmitted over "secure Sockets Layer" (SSL) ("[https ://](https://)") unless the user can receive assurance that the communication with the server can be verified through third party services (VeriSign, etc.).
5. Health information on individuals needs to be limited. Information on health or mental status, hospitalization and location, diagnoses, and prognoses can be prohibited.
6. If possible, handle all financial transactions "in real time;" that is, on an e-commerce website that can process credit card transactions online, thus assuring that non financial data needs to be communicated to the parish / organization.
7. Even if a form will not include financial information, all security protocols described above are to be followed if other sensitive or personally identifiable information is transmitted.
8. Acquire a third party secure certificate (e.g. VeriSign, Geotrust, etc.) for any web server that will handle SSL ([https ://](https://)) transmissions.