



DIOCESE OF
FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND
SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

POLICY FOR ALL YOUTH EVENTS INVOLVING OVERNIGHT STAY CONDUCTED OR SPONSORED BY A PARISH, SCHOOL OR ORGANIZATION OF THE DIOCESE OF FORT WAYNE – SOUTH BEND

At times, schools, parishes, or other organizations of the diocese may plan trips to an offsite facility or host an event onsite for youth that involves an overnight stay. A youth event is any event that involves young people under eighteen. Having young people in your care overnight is a serious responsibility to undertake. The group leader(s) should carefully reflect upon the purpose of the event and especially upon those activities scheduled to take place “overnight”. The group leaders should add the overnight portion only if they determine it is necessary to achieve the purpose of the event.

Group leaders must adhere to this policy for all overnight events, offsite and onsite, not limited to, but including mission trips, retreats, lock-ins, field trips, sporting competitions and others. Some portions of the following policy may not pertain to an event if it is held on campus. In this instance, use all applicable portions of the policy. **Overnight events with children under the age of 11 are not recommended.**

See “Parental / Guardian Consent Form and Liability Waiver”; “Adult Liability Waiver”; “Incident Investigation Report for Injuries”; and “Driver Information Sheet” in a separate document.

Preparing for the Trip

1. The group leader must obtain approval from the pastor for a parish event or the principal for a school event. The group leader must be approved by the pastor or principal and may be a staff member or volunteer. This person is responsible to the pastor/principal for all logistics related to the trip before, during and after the event.
2. If the trip involves an overnight stay offsite, the designated leader should make an advance visit to the area if possible. The visit will assist in foreseeing any potential risks that may be encountered during the trip. The safety and security of all participants should be carefully assessed. Some areas to keep in mind are: Will additional security need to be provided? What is the distance to the nearest medical facility? What medical services are available? Will the participants require additional vaccinations depending upon the location of the trip?
3. Create a plan of action to respond to emergencies, such as fire, tornado, medical issue and other worst case scenarios. The plans need not be written, but group leaders should discuss them so as to know what to do quickly if one occurs. Share basic safety plans with all participants.
4. Confirm there are adequate facilities for housing all the participants of the group in one location, including all adult chaperones.
5. If the trip is to a non-English speaking location, arrange to have a translator travel with the group.
6. Parents become especially frustrated if their child is injured when there is a lack of communication or an element of surprise about the trip. Parents need to be informed in writing with all details regarding the trip. This would include but not be limited to the following:
 - a. type of activities in which the youth will be participating,
 - b. cost (if any),
 - c. departure and arrival dates and times,
 - d. location and the group leader's contact information,
 - e. names of chaperones,
 - f. mode of transportation (i.e. car, airplane, bus, etc.),
 - g. accommodations,
 - h. parent/legal guardian responsibility,
 - i. behavior expectations, consequences, and the right to search rooms and belongings,
 - j. designated contact at parish/school while group is traveling.

7. A waiver of all claims against the diocese and/or the parish for injury, accident, illness, or death occurring during or by reason of the activity should be obtained from the parents/guardians of each participant. Use the **PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM AND LIABILITY WAIVER** form in this packet or another approved form.
8. All adult group leaders and designated chaperones must complete a waiver of all claims which includes a medical release portion. Use the **ADULT LIABILITY WAIVER** form in this packet or another approved form.
9. All adult chaperones and group leaders must complete the **Safe Environment Program** requirements of the diocese prior to the trip.
10. Chaperones, including group leaders, should review prior to the trip and must follow during the trip the **GUIDELINE FOR CONDUCT WHEN INTERACTING WITH A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON** found in the employee or volunteer manual of the diocese.
11. Determine if any additional insurance coverage is needed. If this trip will take place outside of the United States, all participants should check with their healthcare provider to ensure their coverage will follow them. If coverage would not apply, arrangements should be made to acquire adequate health insurance coverage for the trip.
12. Arrange a meeting or communicate in another effective manner with all participants and parents/legal guardians to fully explain all details of the trip as well as answer any questions. Written behavior standards should be distributed to each participant requiring signatures to indicate the participants have read and understand what is expected of them. If the group leader holds a meeting, he/she will decide if it is mandatory that at least one parent/guardian attends this meeting.
13. Give all chaperones a copy of the **CHAPERONE GUIDELINES** found in this packet.
14. Remind participants to bring along prescription medication or other health items regularly used such as allergy medication or contact solutions. See additional information regarding medication below.

During the Trip

1. Proper supervision must be provided with a minimum of two adults present with each group of students at all times. What is considered “proper” could vary according to the age of participants and the type of activity. The greater the ratio of supervision, the better. Two adults are required in case of emergency.
2. If the scheduled events occur on a Sunday or Holy Day of Obligation, all youth must be afforded the opportunity to go to Mass. The group leader must ensure all youth have transportation to get to Mass and should make an effort to have the youth attend together in order to celebrate as a community of faith.

3. A binder with medical release forms and emergency contact names/numbers for each individual should be carried at all times by the group leader and one of the students' designated chaperones (if the groups separate) in case of injury.
4. Alcohol must not be consumed by group leaders or designated chaperones during the event and travel.
5. If the trip is located outside the U.S., participants should dress appropriately and according to the customs and dress standards of the country which they are visiting.
6. Be aware of the conditions of local tap water. Boiled or bottled water as well as bottled or canned beverages are safest. Select foods carefully and avoid raw foods that can't be peeled or boiled.
7. Youth/Young Adult groups with participants who are both minors (17 and under) and adults (18 and over) must provide separate sleeping areas for each respective age group and gender. High school students who are 18 and not graduated from high school may remain with other high school youth. For school activities that follow immediately upon graduation and are a continuation of current student participation in such events, it is permissible for 18-year-olds to continue to be treated as students for overnight accommodations.
8. The following lodging standards apply to hotel and dormitory room accommodations for adults and children who participate in overnight events.

A. Hotel Rooms

A typical hotel room is a room consisting of at least two beds with quad occupancy, but larger or smaller hotel rooms are common as well. No adult shall room with or occupy the same hotel room with a child except in the case of a parent and the parent's child(ren) only or in the rare case where a child may need the presence of an adult for medical reasons. If unscheduled and unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of event participants occur, at least two adults should occupy the same hotel room with at least two children. A married couple may share the same hotel room, with or without their children, assuming appropriate facilities are available, but no other mixed gender hotel room arrangements are allowed. Adult participants should room in proximity to the rooms occupied by children, either by staggering rooms across from or next to those rooms occupied by children. Adults may conduct brief bed checks in pairs of two of hotel rooms occupied by children only at pre-determined times or to deal with emergencies.

B. Dormitory-Type Accommodations

Dormitory-type accommodations refer to rooms that have large occupancy such as camp quarters with a large number of beds, a gym floor, a large classroom or similar setting. If the setting permits separate rooms for adults and children, then that sleeping arrangement must be used. However, if the facility does not have adequate rooms to separate adult women from female children and adult men from male children, then adults and children of the same gender may occupy dormitory-type accommodations provided there is a minimum of two adults and four children per room and no separate accommodations are available for the adults. In exceptional circumstances, event leaders may determine that chaperones must remain with youth in dormitory-type accommodations to enforce the code of conduct and provide proper supervision. In this situation, at least two adults and four students must be in the dormitory-type room, and adults must establish a separate sleeping area(s) within the room apart from students. No mixed gender dormitory room arrangements are allowed. Adults must never dress or undress in the presence of children and vice versa.

C. Respect of Privacy

Adult participants must respect the privacy of child participants in situations such as changing clothes, taking showers, etc. Adults must protect their own privacy in similar situations. Separate times for adults and children to use the same shared rest room or shower facilities must be communicated and posted. Other than for pre-determined bed checks and the limited time necessary to assist children in settling into or vacating from their rooms, an adult participant should not intrude into a child's room or designated area except to the extent that health, safety or Behavior Code enforcement require. When entering a child's room, adults should do so in pairs.

D. Non-Conforming Conduct

A Behavior Code which describes expected conduct of trip participants, including disciplinary action for violations, should be developed and communicated at the local level to all participants in advance of the overnight trip. In addition, before the overnight trip occurs, all child and adult participants should be made aware of the consequences for non-compliance with these lodging standards. Such consequences shall include a requirement that individuals who violate the lodging standards may be required to return home early, if practical, and be denied the opportunity to participate in future overnight events.

Transportation

Commercial carrier or contracted transportation is the most desirable method to be used for long trips. If transportation is contracted, signed contracts should be executed with an appropriate hold harmless agreement protecting the parish/school and the diocese. Also, contracted carriers should provide proof of insurance with minimum limits of liability of \$2,000,000 CSL (Combined Single Limit).

DO NOT ALLOW 11-15 SEAT PASSENGER VANS TO BE USED FOR TRANSPORTATION.

Questions related to vans should be directed to the Diocesan Business Office.

If a vehicle will be leased, rented, or borrowed to transport participants, appropriate insurance should be obtained and an appropriately licensed driver used. Coverage can be purchased through the rental company or a local agent.

If auto coverage is provided through Catholic Mutual, contact should be made with the Member Services Representative. **COVERAGE CANNOT BE AUTOMATICALLY ASSUMED FOR LEASED, RENTED, OR BORROWED VEHICLES.**

If a private passenger vehicle is used, then the following information must be supplied and this information must be certified by the driver.

1. The driver must be 21 years of age or older.
2. The driver must have a valid, non-probationary driver's license and no physical disability that could in any way impair his/her ability to drive the vehicle safely.
3. The vehicle must have a valid and current registration and license plate(s).
4. The vehicle must be insured for the following minimum limits: \$100,000 per person/\$300,000 per occurrence.
5. The vehicle must have appropriate, functional seat restraints for each passenger including child safety seats for smaller children.

Each driver must complete the ***DRIVER INFORMATION SHEET*** in this packet prior to the trip. Each driver and/or chaperone should be given a copy of the approved itinerary including the route to be followed and a summary of responsibilities.

With the exception of commercial or contracted transportation, the daily maximum miles driven should not exceed 500 miles per vehicle. Also, the maximum number of consecutive miles driven should not exceed 250 miles per driver without at least a 30 minute break.

Medication

One of the chaperones on the trip shall be in charge and have custody of all medication (prescription and over-the-counter) for all youth on the trip. If this adult cannot be present to administer or witness medication for a student, another adult shall be designated. This responsibility is detail-oriented and extremely important. Parents need to provide a complete list of medication taken by their child. Medication must be sent in its original container. A log should be kept for dispensing the medication. The chaperone must note the date, time, and signature when medication is administered.

For Prescriptions: Include the prescription number (if applicable), quantity received, drug strength, expiration date and dosage schedule.

For over-the counter medication: Provide the name of medication, quantity received, and drug strength (e.g. 250 mg), expiration date, and dosage.

Note: Do not administer inoculations of any kind. Youth needing this type of medication (e.g. insulin) are fully trained in this process and the chaperone is only to observe the administration of the inoculation to be sure the medication has been delivered. If a participant is allergic to bee stings or suffers from peanut or other food allergies, and has an epinephrine pen, the participants epi-pen should be available at all times.

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

This form should be filled out completely as soon as possible after any accident/injury occurs. It is best to complete this form while all the details, including conditions and witnesses are still fresh in your mind. Keep this form on file at the parish/school following the event.

CHAPERONE GUIDELINES/BEHAVIOR STANDARDS

Chaperones should be at least 25 years of age. If a sufficient number of adults 25 and over are not available, then adults aged 18-24 may chaperone to fulfill the two –adult requirement. (Note: One of the two assigned chaperones must be 25 or older.) Each chaperone will be assigned to a group of students for which he/she is responsible. Regular daily responsibilities will include:

1. Make sure students are present on the bus or other means of transportation every time transportation is used.
2. Make sure the students are in their room at curfew.
3. Make sure students are awake on time.
4. Make sure students understand daily itinerary.
5. Observe students for suspicious behavior that might involve breaking the rules.
6. Be on guard for students being loud, obnoxious, and/or rude. Do not tolerate this behavior.
7. Assist in medical emergencies and contact person in charge immediately.
8. Inquire within assigned group about any individual medical abnormalities.
9. No students or chaperones should leave the group for unauthorized excursions.
10. Chaperones may search students' rooms and belongings at any time with or without the students' permission.
11. Check rooms for any damage or things left behind.
12. Make sure students are properly dressed at all times.

Behavior standards for chaperones and group leaders include:

1. "Buddy systems" should be used by chaperones; thus, it is very important to ensure 2 adults are present at all times (1 "adult" and 1 individual 18-24 is fine also). However, during transportation, it is permissible to have 1 adult with multiple students in a vehicle provided at the destination there will be at least two chaperones with each group of students.
2. One-to-one contact (interaction) with a student should only occur in a public place.
3. Any verbal or nonverbal sexual behavior with any student is strictly and absolutely prohibited.
4. No student should be touched against his/her will by a chaperone or group leader.
5. No student should be touched on any portion of her/his body that would be covered by a bathing suit.
6. Sexual gestures or overtures a student makes to a staff member or adult should be reported to the appropriate personnel.
7. Do not appear in front of a student when not appropriately clothed.
8. Do not change clothes at the same time in the same room or in view of a student.
9. Driving alone with a student should be avoided at all times.
10. Do not strike or touch a student as a means of discipline.
11. Do not use derogatory language when addressing a student.
12. Be alert for suspicious or unusual behavior.
13. All suspicions of child or sexual abuse need to be reported to the group leader and the state child abuse hotline (see diocesan employee manual or volunteer manual for further information).
14. No student should be allowed to visit chaperones or group leaders in their sleeping quarters.
15. No student should be denied food, water or shelter.