
M E M O R A N D U M



TO: Directors of Religious Education
Directors of Youth Ministry

CC: Fr. Thomas Ferguson, Vicar General & Moderator of the Curia
Mr. Mark Herrmann, General Counsel

FROM: Dcn. Marques Silva

DATE: August 21, 2019

RE: Policy Reminders

As the Diocese begins a new season of religious education and youth ministry, the *Office for the Protection of Children and Young People* (OPCYP) would like to offer a few reminders and best practices to assist you in your ministry. The following serves to update and remind you of some of the OPCYP policies that directly impact your ministries.

Volunteer Applications & Diocesan Compliance

Bishop Burbidge on February 15, 2019, implemented a new OPCYP electronic application process for employees. Effective July 15, 2019, this process was also applied to volunteers. Paper applications are no longer accepted by OPCYP.

This new process has significantly shortened the turn-around time for individuals to be cleared for service. With this new process, please remember to:

- **Communicate with your parish liaison concerning new volunteers.** Provide a list of volunteers to your parish liaison *before* they complete the online application. Parish Liaisons must electronically approve or decline all applications prior to the background check process beginning. The liaisons also have the instructions and appropriate codes for your volunteers to complete the process.
- **Ensure all volunteers are CLEAR before they begin their service.** Diocesan policy requires all employees and volunteers with substantial contact with minors to have successfully completed the online application and cleared the initial CDA background check before beginning service, and to attend the safe environment training within 45 days of submitting their application.
- **Check with your Parish Liaison to ensure external speakers and volunteers are compliant and added to your parish report.** Parish Liaisons now have the ability to search the entire diocese and assign to your parish other compliant individuals. Catechists, speakers, volunteers, etc., who work with your youth and are not normally on your compliance report are to be added by the parish liaison prior to service.

Youth Ministry Participants

High School youth ministry participants are those who are rising freshman (after they have graduated their eighth-grade year) through their senior year of high school. Those individuals in high school and who are the age of majority (18 years plus one day) and prior to his or her 19th year of age, may participate in youth ministry events through the summer following his or her senior year of high school. This exception ends the first day of the Commonwealth of Virginia's college class schedule. Those who 19 years of age and still enrolled in high school may seek

through the DRE or DYM, with the pastor's approval, a waiver to participate in youth events. No high school individuals 20 years of age or older may attend in high school youth ministry or religious education events as a participant. All graduated high school youth or individuals 19 years or older may not serve as an adult volunteer in the ministries at the parish they were involved in youth ministry until they have graduated or are 21 years of age – whichever comes first.

Middle School and High School Events

Middle school and high school youth should not participate in mixed events due to reasons of maturity and experience. This does not preclude high schoolers being used to assist in middle school events, such as assisting small group leaders, serving as high school helpers, etc. However, per diocesan policy, they may not have supervisory authority over other youth with the exception of those official and Diocesan-recognized programs that are designed to foster leadership as an inherent part of the program, e.g., scouting programs.

College and High School Mixed Events

All events located at or on diocesan locations or property, regardless of the organizer, in which high school participants are commingling with or being supervised by college students are required to follow diocesan policy and ensure that all adults 18 years and older are fully compliant. (Exception is made for those who are 18 years of age and still enrolled in high school)

Safe Environment Training

The Diocese requires all minors involved in youth ministry and religious education to participate in the yearly safe environment training. A new program has been added to allow additional variation and assistance to parishes and schools alike. For youth in grades K-8, parishes may choose either *Formation in Christian Chastity* or *Circles of Grace* (new program). The high school programs include: *Called to Protect*, *Tricked* or *Circles of Grace* (new program). Please remember:

- **Presenting the safe environment training must be provided during regularly scheduled religious education or youth ministry.** *Best Practice: For high school ministry, use the programs offered on a rotating basis. Each program addresses safe environments from different perspectives and relate to different environments.*
- **The presentation may not run in the background.** The youth must be focused on this program. It may not be presented during dinner or other activities.
- **The make-up session also must be provided during regularly scheduled religious education or youth ministry.**
- **All training safe-environment training and the make-up session must be completed prior to December 25.**

Cell Phones

Please remember that youth should not have or be using their cell phones during catechetical and or youth ministry events. To assist you, consider:

- **Reminding parents there is no need for cell/smart phones during religious education or youth events.**
- **Provide a box for the youth to turn-in and retrieve their cells phones before and after the event.** Please remember that these are valuable objects and should be

supervised by an adult. *Best Practice: Many parishes have the youth put their name on masking tape and attach it to the phone prior to placing it in the cell phone box.*

External Diocesan Events

There are a number of youth ministry and catechetical opportunities and activities that are available outside of the Diocese of Arlington i.e., Mount 2000, Catholic Heart Workcamp, SOME (So Others May Eat), etc. Please remember:

- **Adults and participants are required to follow and adhere to the more stringent of the child protection policies.** If there is a difference between the Diocese of Arlington policies and those of the local diocesan jurisdiction in which the event takes place, the more stringent of policies take precedence. Examples include:
 - **Diocese of Richmond:** All individuals 18 years of age or older, regardless of their academic year, are adults and may not participate in youth events as youth, or sleep in locations with youth. *Best Practice: Since it is also not prudent to have these individuals sleep with the adult volunteers, consider a room set aside for high school young adults.*
 - **Archdiocese of Washington:** All adults must complete the ADW background check AND Virtus training (Arlington's training does not transfer) prior to participating or chaperoning a youth event (March for Life events are exempt).

DYMs and DREs are responsible for investigating and knowing the policies of the jurisdiction prior to the event.

- **Diocesan certification of compliance.** All non-diocesan events (i.e., non-Diocese of Arlington workcamps, Steubenville Youth Conferences, etc.) that allow other adults who are not Diocese of Arlington volunteers or employees to have supervision over Diocesan youth may not do so without the event organizers receiving certification from those adults' Diocesan Office for the Protection of Children and Young People that they have successfully completed that diocese's background check and safe environment training. *Best Practice: Steubenville Youth Conferences require a Diocesan seal for every adult volunteer and chaperone that attends its youth conference(s). Parish seals are not accepted.*

OPCYP is happy assist you in answering questions or clarifying policies related to the Office of Child Protection. Thank you for your service and all that you do.