

Driving Policy

While we cannot eliminate the possibility of injuries, it is important to take appropriate steps to reduce potential accidents and incidents for the benefit of all involved. Any time a driver gets behind the wheel, the lives of others are in the driver's hands. Since teenaged drivers are four times more likely to be involved in an accident, extra safety must be taken to prevent undesirable outcomes during a youth event involving transportation.

Driver Requirements

To be eligible to drive for Youth Ministry activities, drivers must conform to the following requirements:

- a) Age Limit. Only designated staff and volunteers will drive the parish owned or rented buses and cars for any youth trip. These drivers must be at least 21 years old (25 years old and authorized to drive through the Diocesan Office of Risk Management for WorkCamp). Licensed drivers under 18 years of age are only allowed to drive THEMSELVES to and from events; however, they are NOT allowed to drive during a Youth Ministry event.
- b) Driving Other Youth. Completed permission slips must be signed by all sets of parents -- the youth driver and a parent or guardian for each youth passenger before a driver under 21 years of age may transport other youth to an event.
- c) Early Departure. On occasions when a youth will need to leave an away-from-parish event early or go directly home from the event, it is possible for him/her to drive his/her personal vehicle to the event. Students needing to leave early must have written permission from parents or prior oral communication to the adult supervising the event. It is not always in the best interest of a youth ministry event for students to transport themselves or be there for only a portion of the time. Therefore, the adult supervising has the right to deny a request for planned early departure or youth driving themselves. Parents will be contacted if it is known that a student has left an event early without prior parental permission.
- d) Follow the Laws. Driving is a privilege. The driver must agree to obey all state laws, including speed limits, and to follow the driving guidelines set in this policy. It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that all vehicle safety and traffic laws are observed.
- e) Late Arrival. If the adult supervising an overnight event allows a student to arrive late due to a legitimate unavoidable conflict, the required permission slips must be submitted in advance.
- f) No Cell Phone. Cell calls and texting is not permitted while driving. The only exception is when the driver has his/her cell phone synchronized to the hands-free calling system in their personal vehicle.
- g) Parish or Diocesan Vehicles. Any individual who wishes to drive a diocesan owned or rented vehicle must be authorized to drive for the diocese by the Office of Risk Management.
- h) Personal Vehicles. Unless permission is given by parents, youth will not be allowed to drive their personal vehicles on youth outings. All operators of personal vehicles must be insured under a family or personal policy providing automobile liability and a copy of the vehicle registration must be located in the vehicle during the trip. Proof of insurance may be requested.
- i) Valid License. The driver must have a valid driver's license.

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Driving Guidelines

These rules are for all drivers involved in youth events:

- a) Air Bags. Youth weighing less than 100 pounds may not be seated near an air bag.
- b) Bad Weather. Driving events should be canceled in cases of severe weather. Participants need to know how to find out about cancellations with plenty of time to eliminate unnecessary risk.
- c) Communication List. It is encouraged that each group should have a list of contact phone numbers for each vehicle with a designated passenger willing and able to maintain communication between vehicles.
- d) Maximum Driving Length. Driving time is limited to a maximum of 10 hours and must be interrupted by frequent rest, food, and recreation stops. If there is only one driver, the driving time should be reduced to 8 hours and stops should be made more frequently.
- e) Multiple Vehicles. When more than one vehicle is used to transport participants, all drivers should have a complete address and/or phone number or written directions, and be briefed on the area. Whenever possible, conditions making it difficult to follow other vehicles should be avoided, such as driving during rush-hour or at night.
- f) Passengers. The number of passengers may not exceed the number of working passenger seat restraints. Passengers may leave the vehicle only when the engine is turned off or the driver gives verbal permission. No youth are to leave the vehicle while it is stopped in traffic or at a traffic signal. Passengers are not to hinder or distract the driver while the vehicle is in motion.
- g) Preferred Transportation. Buses are the preferred method of transportation for all Youth Ministry activities. When buses are not feasible, team drivers may be used. Using personal vehicles is not ideal.
- h) Report Violations. If a driver disregards any of the driving guidelines it should be reported to the Pastor, DRE, or staff employee supervising the trip. It shall be their decision as to any actions taken.
- i) Seat Belts. Everyone is to have a seat belt on while the vehicle is in motion, even when the law allows otherwise.
- j) Van Policy. For safety reasons, the use of 15 passenger vans is prohibited to transport minors.
- k) Vehicle Safety. All vehicles that are used for and during Youth Ministry events shall meet all legal requirements, including current license plates.

Renting Cars

The Catholic Diocese of Arlington is an Emerald Club Member with Enterprise Rent-A-Car and membership is available for parishes, schools and parish/school groups to use when renting vehicles for business purposes. This membership offers several benefits including: discounted rates on vehicles, no fees for additional drivers, and no surcharge for renters between the ages of 21 and 25. Enterprise Rent-A-Car has accepted the diocese as an Emerald Member with discount rates on all types of vehicles and has assigned billing numbers for all locations. Please refer to the [ORM website](#) for more information.

The agency understands that diocesan automobile liability insurance will be in effect for the rental. You do not need to purchase any insurance from the rental agency. Please make sure the reservation agent knows immediately that you are part of the Diocese of Arlington and that you

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will be using the diocesan account and your location billing number. Everyone who is driving youth should be an authorized driver.

Some occurrences are not insurance related, such as intentional negligence (For example: putting diesel fuel in a gasoline powered vehicle). Insurable accidents have a \$500 deductible and non-insurance damages are the responsibility of the parish or school renting the vehicle. All damages should be reported to the Office of Risk Management as soon as damages are known.

How to Make a Reservation with Enterprise: It is suggested to place your car rental reservation through the link found on the Diocesan Risk Management Driver Program website at <https://www.arlingtondiocese.org/risk-management/driver-program/>. Each location is assigned their own billing number and a booking link so a PO number is no longer needed. If you choose to call your local Enterprise location or their toll-free number to make your reservation, you will need the diocesan account number and your location billing number. Please contact the Office of Risk Management to obtain this information. Your parish will be billed directly.

For any rental car account issues please contact the Risk Specialist, Mary Manilla-Smith, within Office of Risk Management at 703-841-2503 or riskmanagment@arlingtondiocese.org