

POLICY AND GUIDELINES FOR CHILD AND YOUTH OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES

POLICY STATEMENT

OVERVIEW

Events sponsored or coordinated by a school or parish must be related to a specific school or church activity with defined goals and objectives and properly supervised. These events are not to be simply an opportunity for travel or socialization. Field trips, retreat days and other excursions include, but are not limited to, altar servers' parties, choir outings, confirmation service projects, class retreats, etc., involving persons under 18 years of age. All activities must be in compliance with this policy, and have the approval of the Pastor, Principal, and/or the coordinator of church events (e.g. DRE, Youth Director, etc.). Parent/Guardian permission slips and, if applicable, driver information forms should be utilized for all off-site functions. (See **Parish Administrative Manual** pages **V-9** and **V-10**).

In all instances, written parental approval is required along with proper supervision.

Schools

Approval of the Superintendent of Schools, Principal and Pastor are required for school events that involve taking children off School or Parish property.

Events sponsored or coordinated by a school must be related to a specific school activity with defined goals and objectives and properly supervised. All school activities must be in compliance with the policy on field trips and transportation found in the **Handbook of Policies and Procedures for Catholic Schools**.

Parishes

Approval of the Pastor and the appropriate responsible person in charge of the event (e.g. DRE, Youth Directors, etc.) are required for parish related events.

Events sponsored or coordinated by the parish might not be related to a church activity but must be properly supervised. Parent/Guardian permission slips and, if applicable, driver information forms must be utilized for all off-site functions.

OVERNIGHT FIELD TRIPS

Pre-K through 8th Grade

The Archdiocese of Santa Fe does not give approval for, or allow, overnight events for Pre-K through 8th Grade. This is due to potential liabilities associated with the transportation and

chaperoning of children. Field trips, retreat days, and any other type of excursion attended by children Pre-K through 8th Grade are to be of one day duration only.

High School

Youth of high school age may participate in overnight events provided they are properly supervised. Parent/Guardian permission slips and, if applicable, driver information forms must be utilized for all off-site functions.

All events require approval and proper supervision as stated in the above Overview.

SUPERVISION OF MINORS

All approved events involving children Pre-K through High School require proper supervision. All teachers, coordinators, and chaperones must provide evidence of having participated in the required Archdiocese of Santa Fe's Sexual Abuse Prevention Workshop. All adult leaders and/or chaperones must be advised of their responsibilities and the seriousness of their role.

TRANSPORTATION OF MINORS

Because of potential risks associated with transporting minors off school/church property, all safety and transportation requirements must be adhered to. Schools and parishes alike must follow the **Archdiocesan Fleet & Transportation Policy** found on page **V-5** in the **Parish Administrative Manual** regarding parish or school owned vehicles. Public licensed carriers or school buses are the most desirable method of transportation. **Use of 10-15 passenger vans are prohibited** (refer to **Parish Administrative Manual** page **V-11**). If private passenger cars are utilized, parents and volunteers using personal vehicles must be advised that their insurance coverages are primary and driver information sheets must be completed. In all type of vehicles, available seat belts must be utilized.

PARISH GUIDELINES FOR CHILD AND YOUTH OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES

The following Parish Guidelines for Child and Youth Off-Site Activities accompany the Statement of Policy on pages 1 and 2 above, found in Section V of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe Parish Administrative Manual. For School Guidelines for Field Trips refer to the Catholic Schools Administrative Manual.

1 Definition and Restrictions

An Off-Site Activity is defined as an excursion that (a) involves children or youth enrolled in a parish program of religious education, youth ministry or other parish ministry, (b) is sponsored by the parish and/or coordinated by parish leaders whether employed or volunteers, (c) involves taking the children or youth away from the parish property or the site where the parish program regularly occurs. Even when the parents provide the transportation and/or serve as chaperones during the off-site activity, the activity is still governed by these Guidelines since it has been sanctioned by the parish.

The Archdiocese of Santa Fe takes a very conservative position regarding off-site activities. Aside from the inherent difficulties and potential liabilities associated with transporting and chaperoning minors away from the parish, there are distinct advantages to restricting such privileges to high school age, when youth are more mature, aware, and capable of benefiting from the activity.

2 Approval and Documentation Required

The pastor of the parish (or the parish life coordinator) must pre-approve all off-site activities. **It is expected that permission for an off-site activity will be secured before any announcement or other preparations are made.**

Parents must pre-approve their child's participation in the field trip, in writing, and they have the right to refuse their child's participation without incurring any penalty. The parish is to ensure that each child's parent/guardian signs a permission form, in advance, which also releases the parish of liability and covers medical emergencies (Parent/Guardian Permission Slip, page V-9). The parish leader responsible for the off-site activity carries with her/him the completed Parent/Guardian Permission Slips during the off-site activity and keeps them on file at the parish for one year.

3 Chaperones

All off-site activities must be chaperoned by an adequate ratio of adults (over age 21) to children/youth commensurate with the age and maturity of the children/youth. Prior to leaving the parish for the off-site activity all chaperones and accompanying adults must provide written verification of having taken the Archdiocesan Sexual Misconduct Prevention Workshop (SMP).

4 Overnight Off-Site Activities

- a. Elementary Grades — As stated in the policy, overnight off-site activities are not permitted for elementary grade children (pre-K through 8).
- b. High School Grades — Overnight off-site activities are permitted for high school youth (grades 9-12) when the activity is part of the religious education or youth ministry program provided that all safety provisions are met. Permission for an overnight off-site activity must be requested in advance, in writing, from the pastor and must include a cost accounting of income and expenses. Items that are variable, such as food, may be estimated in advance and a final report provided after the trip. The final report must itemize income and expenses, with receipts for all expenses, and a copy provided to the pastor by the person responsible for the off-site activity. The report must also be available for review, upon request, by parents/guardians.

5 Chaperone Guidelines for Overnight Off-Site Activities

- a. Sleeping and Bath Accommodations
 1. Adults and chaperones are not to be housed in the same room with minors except when the minor is the child of the adult or chaperone.
 2. As an exception to #1 above, in a large dorm situation adult chaperones of the same gender may be housed in the same room with minors provided that at least two adult chaperones and at least four minors are assigned to the dorm. All of the adult chaperones must have participated in the Sexual Misconduct Prevention Workshop and have undergone the criminal history background check.
 3. There is to be no co-ed sleeping in tents or hotel rooms.
 4. Chaperones are not to use a community shower with minors, nor should a chaperone be in any state of undress except in the privacy of his or her room.
 5. All adults and chaperones must understand that extreme caution must be exercised at these times so that no actions have the potential for misinterpretation.
 6. In the case of public restrooms and shower areas, adult chaperones should be in the vicinity of the restroom to monitor the coming and going of the students and to be available in case of emergency.
 7. Any necessary disciplinary actions or conversations are to be carried out after the minor has had the time to be properly dressed and must take place outside of changing, washing or toilet areas.
- b. Outdoor Camping
 1. It is strongly recommended that tents that can accommodate large numbers be used whenever possible. This will allow for better supervision.
 2. There is to be no co-ed sleeping in tents.
 3. Adults or chaperones are not to sleep in a tent alone with a minor, except when the minor is the adult or chaperone's own child.

4. In the event that outdoor camping is held without tents, there must be enough chaperones available so that at least two chaperones are on duty throughout the night to ensure the safety of the group.
5. No sharing of sleeping bags is to be allowed. Each individual will sleep in a single sleeping bag.

c. Hotel Rooms

1. Care is to be taken when booking hotels for groups. A request must be made upon making reservations that, if possible, all of the rooms be on the same floor in the hotel, in close proximity.
2. All rooms must be checked by the trip coordinator before assigning them to groups to avoid males and females having adjoining doors. Adjoining rooms should only be shared by minors of the same gender.
3. No minor is to be allowed to leave the hotel property or go swimming in the hotel's pool or use the whirlpool or the hotel's exercise room without adult supervision.
4. Minors must never be allowed unsupervised access to the hotel rooms.
5. Minors must always be informed and reminded of safety rules and security measures.
6. Chaperones must have room keys at all times for minors' rooms and it is recommended that the chaperone monitor rooms periodically; however, chaperones should conduct such monitoring in pairs.
7. Adults and minors are not to be housed in the same room, with the exception of families staying together.

d. Other Accommodations

1. Care is to be taken that sleeping areas are clearly segregated between males and females. In situations where males and females share a common large room (example: a parish hall), a sufficient number of chaperones should be provided on a rotating schedule to provide constant supervision.
2. No minors may spend the night with a lone adult chaperone or enter the private living quarters of an adult chaperone except when the minor and adult are part of the same immediate family.
3. No minors may enter the private living quarters of any clergy or spend the night in a rectory except when accompanied by their parents and part of the same immediate family as the priest or deacon.

e) Miscellaneous

1. Caution must be taken when viewing any movies that may contain any violence or sexually explicit content. All movies are to be screened and approved by an adult or chaperone before minors view them.
2. If a minor is taking medication that must be administered by an adult chaperone, the parent must give the chaperone explicit written directions and written permission to administer the prescribed medication.

f) Adults and Chaperones—Education and Screening

1. All adult volunteers, all employees and all clergy will have a current criminal history background check and have attended the Archdiocese of Santa Fe Sexual Misconduct Prevention Workshop.
2. With younger children, a higher proportion of adults to minors is recommended.
3. On any trip that involves an overnight stay, change of clothes, showers and for any event in which strong emotional reactions on the part of the minors can be anticipated, a higher proportion of adults to minors is recommended.
4. All adults and chaperones should lead by example, following as much as possible the same rules given to minors (for example, no alcohol consumption).
5. Adults or chaperones shall not at any time purchase questionable or illegal items for a minor (examples: cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, weapons, condoms, and sexually-suggestive materials) and shall report the possession and/or attempt to sell these items to the responsible adult leader.
6. The pastor or his delegate must approve all chaperones for each overnight event.
7. No adult who has been convicted of or is undergoing legal prosecution for any criminal act involving sexual misconduct with a minor is to be allowed to chaperone any minors or to serve or minister in any other capacity in the church or school.

g) Behavior of Minors

1. Clear expectations for behavior of minors should be created for the outing or other event.
2. All minors will be clearly instructed about the expected behavior and other rules pertaining to their behavior, as well as the consequences for breaking the rules, during the outing or other event.

h) Notifications

1. A clear itinerary with contact information for the responsible adult is to be left with the pastor or his designate prior to departure.
2. A clear itinerary with contact information for the responsible adult must be provided to the parent/guardian of each participant with the names of adult leaders, hotel name (if any), and contact information (telephone numbers, including mobile phones).
3. Copies of parent/guardian permission slips for all participants are to be carried by the responsible adult in charge of the activity; separate copies are to be left at the parish where they are accessible during the activity.
4. Adult leaders and chaperones are encouraged to carry beepers or mobile phones during off-site activities, in case of emergency.

5. A detailed list of all participants and chaperones, including the telephone numbers of chaperones, and a list of parents/guardians to be contacted in the case of emergency during the off-site activity must be left with the parish sponsoring the activity.
6. The pastor or his delegate is to be notified immediately of any major accident or disciplinary issue that may arise during the off-site activity. The pastor or his delegate shall immediately notify the appropriate diocesan personnel.

6 Transportation of Minors

- a) Because of the potential risks associated with transporting minors off parish property, the parish must strictly observe all transportation and safety requirements.
- b) Public licensed carriers or school buses are to be used whenever possible.
- c) The driver of any parish/school owned vehicle transiting minors must have the proper license to operate the vehicle and have completed the criminal history background check through the New Mexico Department of Public Safety. Only licensed drivers at least 21 years old may serve in this capacity.
- d) The driver of any motor vehicle that has a 16-passenger capacity (including the driver) must hold a current and valid commercial driver's license.
- e) School bus/van guidelines and regulations provided by Catholic Mutual must be strictly followed.
- f) Private passenger vehicles may be used for transporting minors only when the Archdiocesan Fleet and Transportation Policy is followed.
- g) Parents and volunteers using personal vehicles must be advised that their insurance coverages are primary.
- h) In all types of vehicles, available seat belts must be utilized.
- i) Questions about transportation requirements may be directed to the Catholic Mutual Office at the Catholic Center.

Reference Documents

1. *Archdiocese of Santa Fe Parish Administrative Manual, Section V, pages 5-11* (revised 3/28/08)
2. *Parent/Guardian Permission Slip/Medical Authorization/Indemnity Agreement Form* (revised 3/28/08)
3. *Field Trip Driver Information Sheet Form*
4. *Health and Emergency Information Form*
5. *Archdiocesan Fleet and Transportation Policy*
6. *Policy of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe Relating to Sexual Misconduct Including Sexual Harassment* (revised 8/06/06)