SAFE ENVIRONMENT SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY FOR THE DIOCESE OF GREEN BAY

Social networks and other digital communication offer individuals, groups and the Catholic Church an opportunity to connect in positive ways. We are able to encourage one another, strengthen community ties and boldly proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

While communication has technically advanced, it is at its core a human interaction. This *Safe Environment Social Communications Policy* creates clear standards and expectations for online and digital communication to protect children, youth and individuals at risk in virtual spaces. A Diocesan location or system may adopt a local practice that is stricter than this policy but may not adopt a practice that fails to meet the standards and expectations that follow.

Adherence to Diocesan Codes of Conduct

All communication of clergy and employees (referred to as "ministry representatives" in this document) of the Diocese of Green Bay with non-related minors and individuals at risk should conform to "*Our Promise to Protect" - Safe Environment Policy, Diocese of Green Bay* (http://www.gbdioc.org/images/stories/Protecting/pdf/Our_Promise_to_Protect_2012.pdf).

Ministry representatives should always remember that they are representatives of their parish, school or Catholic organization, and should conduct themselves accordingly, sharing a positive, joyful witness to the Gospel with others at all times.

Mandatory reporting

Ministry representatives must immediately report any form of social communication they receive which indicates existing or imminent harm or danger of sexual abuse of a minor to civil authorities. The content of the communication must also be reported to parish leadership, and the Safe Environment Coordinator (920-272-8174) in collaboration for the safety of the individual.

Parents as primary catechists and decision makers

Parents are the primary catechists and role models of discipleship to their children. All ministry representatives have a responsibility to respect the wishes and stated desire of parents with regard to their child's level of participation in the use of social media or any form of digital communication and the parent's right to be aware of the content of non-public communications between ministry representatives and their children.

A parent or guardian must complete the ***Parental/Guardian Statement of Intent*** before any ministry representative may engage in any electronic communication with any unrelated minor or individual at risk, with whom they have any connection because of their ministry. The signed ***Parental/Guardian Statement of Intent*** is kept on file at the local level, and it should be refreshed annually. No ministry representative may engage in any non-public electronic communication (any digital communication to which a parent or guardian does not have direct and immediate access) with any unrelated minor or individual at risk without a parent or guardian having granted permission (selecting "Yes, I authorize") to do so in the ***Parental/Guardian Statement of Intent.***

Guidelines for use of written words, photos, videos and audio recordings

Clergy, employees, and volunteers must obtain parental or guardian permission to photograph, videotape or otherwise record, copy or distribute any personally identifiable information - including, but not limited to, a minor's full name, photograph, video recording, audio recording, home address, email, telephone number, creative work or any other form of content that would allow someone to identify or contact that minor or individual at risk.

A standard of transparency

Ministry representatives are always witnesses and disciples of Jesus Christ. Therefore, complete transparency is imperative and necessary regarding the content of all digital communication with unrelated minors or individuals at risk.

All ministry representatives must agree to all communication between themselves and any unrelated minor or individual at risk is open to review, and each parish, school or organization must retain consent for this on their premises. This written consent is included as part of the acknowledgement and agreement form for this Policy. Ministry representatives will refrain from using any platform where a record or archive of communication cannot be obtained.

Ministry representatives must always be able to be identified personally in any web, social networks or any other digital profile by their common name or photo. Aliases are not to be used. If you are an employee, an official email account connected to the parish, school, ministry or diocese must be used for all email communication with unrelated minors and individuals at risk. Whenever practical, an official parish, school, ministry or diocese platform should be used for other types of social media communication as well.

Ministry representatives must maintain appropriate boundaries and should use language in their posts that clearly reinforces and identifies their role or affiliation with that ministry, when promoting or discussing ministry events.

Parents or guardians have the right to be made aware of and to request to review non-public social communication between their child or individual at risk, and ministry representatives in its various forms. In exceptional situations when a parent or guardian is not made aware of the content of a non-public social communication, the ministry representative must share that communication with their Supervisor or another ministry representative or another Virtus trained, background-checked adult if the Supervisor is unavailable. It is up to the individual parish, school or organization to determine the form and standards in which this is made available to individuals and how it is retained. Informing parents or guardians is not required for non-private communications such as those sent to youth groups regarding meeting locations or times or other administrative matters.

Accountability

For the protection of all individuals, it is *highly recommended* that ministry representatives follow a *TWO PLUS ONE Policy* for digital communication responding to unrelated minors and individuals at risk. The TWO PLUS ONE standard follows that whenever a ministry individual has the chance to invite another VIRTUS-trained, background-checked adult into the communication, they should do so. This standard fosters safe environments by providing transparency, accountability and a second, checked adult presence when digital communication takes place.

Any parish, school or organization that creates an official ministry page, social media outlet or other digital presence is required to have at least one *paid staff member* maintaining administrator-level privileges to each web-based or social media outlet. This staff member should be assigned as the designated “primary contact” for the outlet, and this information made available to parents.

Questions

Any questions about this policy may be directed to the Office of Safe Environment at 920-272-8174.

Parental/Guardian Statement of Intent for the use of Social Communications

CERTIFICATION, ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AUTHORIZATION FOR CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM FOR SOCIAL MEDIA OR OTHER ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION INVOLVING MINORS AND INDIVIDUALS AT RISK

I am the parent or legal guardian of _____ (full name of minor/individual at risk).

I have been made aware of the *Safe Environment Social Communications Policy for the Diocese of Green Bay and any related local practices and guidelines concerning social communication*.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Permission for ministry representatives to digitally communicate with your minor/individual at risk</td></tr>
<tr><td>_____ Yes, I authorize…</td><td rowspan="2">communication with my minor/individual at risk electronically, including via social media or other digital means, in accordance with the Safe Environment Social Communications Policy for the Diocese of Green Bay by staff ministry representatives of or diocesan-affiliated ministry representatives of the Diocese of Green Bay.</td></tr>
<tr><td>_____ No, I do not authorize…</td></tr>
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If I choose to rescind my consent to the Authorization, I agree that I will inform the appropriate responsible party of the Parish / School / Faith Formation/ Ministry Program in writing and that my rescission will not take effect until it is received. I understand however that it may not be possible to recall any work or photos that have been published prior to receipt of my written rescission.

I have read this certification, acknowledgement, statement of intent and if indicated, release, and have had the opportunity to consider its terms, and understand it. I execute it voluntarily and with knowledge of its significance.

Parent/Guardian Name (please print):_____

Email address: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____Date:_____

***For ministry representatives*: Reception, review and agreement to abide by the *Safe Environment Social Communications Policy for the Diocese of Green Bay*.**

Acknowledgement
_____ I have reviewed the *Safe Environment Social Communications Policy for the Diocese of Green Bay* and agree to abide by it for communication with minors and individuals at risk.

Consent to complete transparency
____ I agree and consent that , the Diocese of Green Bay and anyone authorized by or the Diocese of Green Bay to have access to any digital communication or content, in any form, involving communication with a non-related child or individual at risk. I will follow the archive guidelines for these items as established by .

I have read this certification, acknowledgement, statement of intent and if indicated, release, and have had the opportunity to consider its terms, and understand it. I execute it voluntarily and with knowledge of its significance.

Your name (please print): _____

Your title or position: _____
(Please add "volunteer" to your description if not a paid role)

Email address: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Your signature: _____ Date: _____