

SAFE VIRTUAL GATHERINGS

Diocese of Rochester

A guide of mandatory and best practices for safe virtual diocesan gatherings using policies from the Diocese of Rochester and other appropriate organizations.

MANDATORY

SAFE ENVIRONMENT COMPLIANCE

All Virtual Conference or Learning Session must be In Accordance with the Diocesan Safe Environment Policies, Code of Conduct, and Social Media Guidelines/Policies.

BEST PRACTICE

SAFE ENVIRONMENT COMPLIANCE

Catechetical Leaders/Youth Ministers should review CaSE policies, employee Code of Conduct as well as the Adult and Youth Volunteer Code of Conduct.

MANDATORY

COPPA COMPLIANCE

All Virtual Live or Recorded sessions must ensure that what we do is in line with Children's Online Policy and Protection Rule COPPA.

BEST PRACTICE

COPPA COMPLIANCE

COPPA imposes certain requirements on operators of websites or online services directed to youth under 13, and on operators of other websites or online services that have actual knowledge that they are collecting personal information online from a child under 13.

MANDATORY

CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Clear Communications must be provided to parents regarding Virtual Conference or Learning Session so that they are informed of the dates, times and reasons for the session and have an opportunity to decide if they want their child to participate.

BEST PRACTICE

CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Email or direct phone conversation to adults is acceptable and highly recommended prior to virtual sessions. Be mindful that some families may have limited or no internet. Some may have data caps. Try to use platforms that allow people to join either via the computer or to call in and join only for sound.

MANDATORY

RECORDING NOTIFICATION

Parents and youth must be notified that the session will be recorded for the safety of everyone.

MANDATORY

PARENT ACCESS

Parents must be given the ability and the corresponding links or phone numbers to join virtually at any time.

BEST PRACTICE

PARENT ACCESS

Email or text messaging is acceptable. It is always best to check that links work correctly before clicking "Send."

MANDATORY

BROADCASTING NOTIFICATION

Catechetical Leaders must notify youth and parents that broadcasting a video stream from their end is optional. They must be given the opportunity to join with only an audio connection on the two-way conference.

BEST PRACTICE

BROADCASTING NOTIFICATION

Email or text messaging is acceptable.

MANDATORY

ADVANCED NOTICE

The use of Virtual conference or learning session must be approved in advance in writing by the catechetical leader's supervisor.

BEST PRACTICE

ADVANCED NOTICE

Email is acceptable for approval. Two adults should be in attendance.

MANDATORY

LOCATION & TIME

The physical location of the recording or live session must be a professional setting such as a classroom or home-office. It should NOT be an intimate setting such as a bedroom. Two-way streaming from a restroom is never acceptable. Adults are permitted to initiate communication with minors between 8AM and 9PM. Virtual conference or learning sessions MUST be limited to this time frame.

BEST PRACTICE

LOCATION & TIME

Be mindful when choosing to broadcast live that you check the background for any materials that may be distracting, inappropriate, or potentially offensive, both audio and visual. Make sure your setting is tidy. Adults and Youth must be dressed professionally and modestly. It is appropriate to notify parents that the same expectations are in place for young people participating in virtual sessions.

MANDATORY

BOUNDARIES

Appropriate boundaries must exist between adult ministers and minors so that effective ministry may occur. Adults are NOT friends or buddies with the minors they serve. All electronic interaction with youth, including Virtual conference or learning session, must be conducted as if the adult minister would be willing to say or give the same response in the presence of that minor's parents.

BEST PRACTICE

BOUNDARIES

Parents should be invited and encouraged to attend. Code of Conduct for Youth Participants should be shared with parents beforehand. Schedule a meeting rather than invite people to your personal chatroom. This will generate a link that you can share with others and will prevent people from conferencing at any time. When sharing a link, try not to post it to social media, doing this allows anyone to join the conference. Instead, email the link to your contact list and on social media tell them to email for meeting information.

MANDATORY

ADULT PRESENCE

Two adults, who have completed CaSE and a diocesan background check, must be present on each Virtual conference or learning session.

BEST PRACTICE

ADULT PRESENCE

Email is acceptable for approval. Two adults should have access to the recording.

MANDATORY

RECORDING

All streaming sessions must be recorded, and great care must accompany the handling of the recording after the session. Virtual conference or learning sessions that include minors must NOT be posted publicly online.

BEST PRACTICE

RECORDING

Access of the recording involving youth should only be given with a valid reason to the youth recorded in the session, their parents, or parish and diocesan staff.