

V. Guidelines for Work or Service *in Ministry* with Minors and/or Vulnerable Adults

Definitions:

A **minor** is anyone who has not reached the age of 18.

A **vulnerable adult** is defined as any adult who has reached age 18 who would be considered uniquely vulnerable to abuse because of physical or mental disability that substantially impairs the person's ability to provide adequately for their own care or protection, including adults who habitually lack the use of reason.

A **Service Area** refers to the particular program or ministry. Examples of Service Areas dedicated to Ministry with Minors include the Catholic School Office, Youth Ministry, and Religious Education. The Policy in the EIM provides principles which guide all members of the Diocese in their ministry. However, your Service Area may also have manuals which contain additional specific guidelines and procedures.

Who should be Screened and Trained Prior to *Ministerial* Service with Minors and/or Vulnerable Adults?

Without exception, the following individuals must be screened:

- All clerics
- All religious and seminarians
- All persons employed in any parish, Catholic school or diocesan office or agency
- All volunteers serving in a supervisory capacity over minors or vulnerable adults (i.e. child care provider during parish functions, overnight chaperone, etc.)
- All volunteers serving at a school or parish program (where minors/vulnerable adults are typically present) three or more times in any given calendar year (from January 1-December 31) *

*It is the safest practice to carefully screen all parent volunteers prior to service with minors. Every effort should be made to determine whether a volunteer will be providing continued service or participating in only one or two events per year. If a volunteer is only serving as an occasional volunteer "fewer than 3 times a year", that volunteer should be properly supervised by an EIM compliant adult.

Groups or persons who **must** be screened include but are not limited to:

- religious education teachers
- youth ministers
- coaches
- room parents
- school readers, recess and lunchroom helpers
- parish nursery and Mother's Day Out program employees and volunteers
- children's choir/music ministry
- coordinators of altar servers
- parish/school sponsored Scout groups
- any member of a group (ladies/men's clubs, Knights of Columbus, Serra Club, etc.) volunteering for a parish or school event involving minors 3 or more times a year

Examples of groups or persons who **may** be screened at the discretion of parish leadership:

- liturgical ministers
- greeters/ushers,
- adult altar servers
- extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion
- readers
- adult choir/music ministry
- sacristans
- homebound/hospital ministry

In order to best protect all children and youth, the following organizations are also **strongly encouraged** to adhere to these same screening guidelines:

- Catholic parent-chartered Scout groups
- Catholic organizations that may serve youth even though their primary function is not necessarily to serve youth (i.e., ladies/men's clubs, Knights of Columbus, Knights of Peter Claver, Serra Club/vocations ministry, etc.)
- homeschool ministry beyond immediate family

Additionally, Pastors and Principals may determine that those in any parish/school leadership position (i.e., Pastoral Council and School Advisory Council members) should be in compliance with this diocesan EIM policy as a symbol of leadership within the parish or school ministry. The Diocese encourages all its members to arm themselves with knowledge about sexual abuse by attending *Virtus Protecting God's Children training*.

Companies, contractors or individuals providing intermittent services (i.e., plumber) are to be supervised when on parish/school property and should be segregated from minors; thus they do not need to complete the Screening and Training Process (outlined below) to provide such service. If the company, contractor or individual will be providing services on diocesan property where they *may* come into contact with minors (unsupervised), the Vendor/Contractor Certification Form and Contractor Code of Ethical Conduct form must be completed prior to service. These forms can be found in the Appendix.

Screening and Training Process: What Process Must be Completed Prior to Ministry with Minors and/or Vulnerable Adults?

Prior to working or volunteering with minors and/or vulnerable adults, all Personnel must be screened according to this policy. There may be additional requirements found in the Diocesan Administrative Manual, the Employee Handbook, School Office Manual or your Service Area Manual. You are responsible for understanding the specific requirements set forth in the Service Area program in which you are participating.

If you are arrested, all Personnel shall report any arrest to the Ombudsman in the Office of Child and Youth Protection (OCYP) for monitoring and evaluation. Failure to report an arrest could result in immediate suspension and/or termination of ministry according to applicable canon and civil law.

Screening of Adults (18 years or older): What are the requirements?

1. Completion of an application for working or volunteering in the Diocese (see the Appendix for the Diocesan Volunteer Application)
 2. Completed Background Evaluation and a repeated background evaluation every 5 years
 3. Completion of the *Virtus Protecting God's Children Training for Adults* (or equivalent *Praesidium* training) by ALL employees of the diocese and volunteers working with minors or vulnerable adults three or more times in any given calendar year.
 4. Acknowledgement of (read and sign, or acknowledge online) the *Policy on Ethics and Integrity in Ministry* (EIM) annually
- Additional screening procedures, such as reference checks and face-to-face interviews, are required for all candidates for employment. These procedures can be found in the Employee Handbook at <http://www.diocese-kcsj.org/docs/EmployeeHandbook-final.pdf>.
 - Volunteer applicants are subject to reference checks. Supervisors are encouraged to conduct face-to-face interviews, especially when the volunteer is unknown to them.
 - Applicants who transfer to a parish or school in the Diocese from another diocese must complete the Screening Process described in this policy.
 - Church personnel transferring from one parish or school to another within the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph should have their information updated with the Safe Environment Coordinator (SEC) at their primary location, to reflect their site change and any other information that has changed.
 - Questionable or unfavorable background screening results will be reviewed by the OCYP. In such cases, services provided by the individual may continue only after consultation with the Pastor, Principal or Administrator and the Director of the OCYP or the Ombudsman. Some background screening results may disqualify a person from serving with minors and/or vulnerable adults.

Screening of Minors: What are the requirements for Youth Volunteers and/or Employees?

The opportunity for youth to serve in a volunteer capacity within their parish or school is an important part of Catholic formation and education and a foundation for the beginning of a life of Catholic stewardship. However, youth under 18 years old may never serve in a position supervising minors, and *must* be supervised by two EIM compliant adults (age 18 or over) who have completed the Adult Screening and Training Process.

High School Volunteers and/or Employees (ages 15-18)

1. Completion of the Diocesan Volunteer Application. (see Appendix)
2. Acknowledge (read and sign) the Diocesan *Code of Ethical Conduct for Minors Volunteering or Working with Younger Children*. (see Appendix)
3. Completion of *Virtus Protecting God's Children* training for adults. For youth age 15-18 ministering with children, completion of this training is recommended subject to parent's approval and consent.

Note: A background evaluation is not required for anyone under age 18. For further guidelines involving minors working with minors, please refer to your Service Area Manual.

Volunteers under age 15

When parishes or schools provide opportunities for youth under the age of 15 to share their time and talent in supervised ministerial settings as “helpers”, the following screening guidelines apply:

1. Parents or guardians must sign the *Commitment to Ethical Conduct for Minors Volunteering or Working with Younger Children* before their minor may volunteer in any capacity. (see Appendix)
2. The *Diocesan Code of Ethical Conduct for Minors Volunteering or Working with Younger Children* must be signed by the volunteer and reviewed with the volunteer by the adult supervisor. (see Appendix)

Who is Responsible for Screening and Documentation?

1. As a member of this Diocese, it is your responsibility to ensure your screening is complete if you are working with minors or vulnerable adults.
2. At each parish and school, the Pastor is responsible for ensuring that all Personnel working with minors or vulnerable adults in their parish have been screened.
3. Each Pastor shall designate a parish Safe Environment Coordinator (SEC) to assist in this responsibility. The SEC is an extension of the OCYP, and shall be responsible for coordinating the screening and documentation at each parish.
4. The OCYP will perform periodic parish safety audits to ensure safe environments for all minors and vulnerable adults. There will be a compliance check reviewing the screening process and documentation at each parish and school.
5. If an applicant fails or refuses to complete any part of the Screening Requirements, then he/she cannot serve in ministry. The Pastor or his designee will inform the individual that he/she cannot begin or continue ministry until in compliance with all the requirements.

When do these Screening Requirements need to be Completed?

1. An employment or volunteer application and background screening consent form must be completed prior to beginning service with a minor or vulnerable adult (continuing ministry is based on successful screening results);
2. Background evaluations must be repeated every 5 years for all employees and clergy in service or ministry for the diocese;
3. Background evaluations must be repeated every 5 years for volunteers working with minors or vulnerable adults for the diocese;
4. The *Policy on Ethics and Integrity in Ministry* (EIM) must be acknowledged prior to any work or service in ministry and must be reviewed and acknowledged annually;
5. The *Virtus Protecting God's Children Training for Adults* must be completed within 60 days of beginning ministry or employment with the diocese.

Safety Guidelines for working with minors and/or Vulnerable Adults

1. One adult should never be alone in a private location with a single minor, except sacramental confession.
 - A private location is a location where an ordinary person would expect privacy - (i.e., bedroom).
 - A private location is also a location that is separated from public view or access (i.e., a room with a closed door and no windows, or covered windows).

- If there is a need for a confidential discussion or training session with a minor, it should occur in a location that is in view of other persons, and the minor should have first and immediate access to the exit.
2. There shall be at least two EIM compliant adults (successfully completed Screening Process) supervising any program involving minors.
 - Church Personnel found to be non-compliant must:
 - i. Complete the first two screening requirements prior to continued ministry;
 - ii. Complete the training requirement for *Protecting God's Children* workshop within 30 days.
 3. All employees and volunteers working with minors have an additional responsibility to adhere to the guidelines found in their particular Service Area Manual (i.e., School Office and Youth Ministry Manuals).
 4. In order to best protect the community, registered sex offenders are not allowed to work or volunteer with minors and/or vulnerable adults in our parishes and/or schools.
 5. Registered sex offenders may not be allowed on school property. Exceptions can be requested by working with the Pastor or Principal of the parish or school. See the Sexual Offender Policy for Diocesan Early Childcare Centers, Elementary and High Schools or the appropriate service area manual for further details.

Standards for Interactions with Minors and/or Vulnerable Adults

Appropriate *ministerial* contact between adults and minors and/or vulnerable adults constitutes a positive part of church life.

Examples of appropriate contact with minors for Church programs include, but are not limited to:

- a. verbal praise
- b. brief side hugs or arm around the shoulder
- c. brief pat on the shoulder or upper back
- d. hand-shakes, "high-fives", knuckle bumps or hand slaps
- e. brief touching of hand, face, head, shoulder or arm of minor
- f. holding hands while walking with small children
- g. sitting beside small children
- h. kneeling or bending down for a brief hug with small children
- i. holding hands during prayer

Some forms of contact have been used by adults to violate a child's appropriate and established boundaries. **In order to maintain the safest possible environment, examples of contact with minors that are not to be used include, but are not limited to:**

- a. long and/or inappropriate frontal embraces
- b. kisses on the mouth
- c. holding minors over four years old on the lap or in one's arms; holding younger minors should only be "as needed" (e.g., for comfort) or at the invitation of the parent
- d. touching knees, legs, buttocks, chests or genital areas
- e. being alone in isolated areas such as closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms
- f. playing with hair of a minor
- g. being on a bed with a minor (unless a bed becomes designated "seating space" during daytime hours)
- h. wrestling with minors, tickling minors or piggyback rides
- i. any type of massage, whether given by minor to adult or adult to minor

- j. any form of unwanted affection
- k. oral or written comments that relate to physique, body development, expression of overt physical affection and/or involve other boundary violations
- l. providing alcohol, drugs, tobacco or illegal materials to a minor
- m. giving of gifts or money to a minor without the parent’s knowledge and consent

Furthermore, when Church Personnel are supervising minors, **prohibited behaviors include, but are not limited to:**

- a. swearing or using vulgar language
- b. using, possessing or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- c. discussing their own sexual activities
- d. possessing or displaying sexually oriented or morally inappropriate printed or electronic materials (e.g., magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, Internet sites, etc.)
- e. engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with minors unless the conversations are part of a legitimate lesson and discussion regarding human sexuality (On such occasions, the lessons will convey to youth the Church’s teachings on these topics. If youth have further questions, they should be referred to their parents or guardians for clarification or counseling).
- f. undressing or being nude
- g. taking a shower with a minor
- h. sleeping in the same bed, sleeping bag or tent with a minor, unless the adult is an immediate family member of the minor

Guidelines for Use of Social Media and Electronic Communications

Some examples of Social Media and Electronic Communications include and are not limited to: use of the Internet, blogs, email, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, texting and instant messaging. These methods of electronic communications will be referred to as virtual contacts in this document.

The use of virtual contacts can facilitate sharing of information among minors and adults with certain restrictions. In virtual contacts as in direct encounters with young people, appropriate boundaries must be clearly defined and adhered to in order to protect both minors and adults.

The Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph adheres to the USCCB’s Social Media Guidelines currently found at www.usccb.org/about/communications/social-media-guidelines.cfm#snminors. If you use social media to interact with minors, you need to review and follow the Diocesan Social Media Policy found at <http://www.diocese-kcsj.org/docs/Social-Media-2011.pdf>.

Guidelines for conduct between adults and minors in their virtual contacts include:

- Adults must have written permission from a minor’s parent or guardian before contacting the minor through any virtual contact or before posting pictures, video, and other information that may identify that minor.
- All communications between adult leaders and minors should be transparent and for legitimate ministry related purposes.
- “Friending” requests should be initiated by the minor and not the adult.
- Minors should never be invited or accepted as a “friend” at a private social media page or account of an adult in a supervisory position of that minor.
- Employees and volunteers should set personal profile pages to a “private” setting so that youth do not have access to personal information.

- Social media, texting, tweeting, blogging, and other forms of cyber communication with minors are to be limited to sharing information related to the parish's programs(s).

All Personnel are responsible for learning their responsibilities with social media. If you have a question, please contact the Director of your Service Area or the Director of the OCYP.

Supervision of Programs that Involve Minors and/or Vulnerable Adults

Parish/school leaders shall be aware of all programs for minors and vulnerable adults. A list of these programs should be maintained by the parish or school and include activities, purpose, sponsors or coordinators of the programs, adult/volunteer membership, meeting times and locations. These programs shall be reviewed at least annually to determine whether they have adequate supervision, verify compliance of new members, etc.

1. All new programs for minors (or vulnerable adults) should be reviewed and approved by the Pastor or Principal.
2. Building designs and remodels should be reviewed to ensure maximum visibility and compatibility with OCYP safe environment building practices (i.e., windows in doors, signage on restrooms identifying those for adults, etc.).

VI. Reports of Abuse or Neglect of a Minor or Vulnerable Adult

Abuse of a minor or a vulnerable adult is a crime that cannot be tolerated. Church Personnel have an ethical responsibility to report suspicions of abuse or neglect of minors or vulnerable adults.

Under Missouri law, certain persons have a legal obligation to report suspected abuse or neglect of minors. These "Mandated Reporters" shall immediately report to the Children's Division according to the Revised Statutes of Missouri, sections 210.109 to 210.183 and 352.400. All personnel, whether or not they are mandated reporters have an ethical obligation to report suspicions of abuse or neglect both to the Children's Division Child Abuse Hotline and their local law enforcement agency. We all have a moral obligation to protect children.

Within the Diocese, the following positions (whether paid or volunteer) are considered Mandated Reporters:

- Clergy
- School, Early Childhood Centers, and Day Care Center Administrative Staff
- Parish and Retreat Center Administrative Staff who are in regular contact with minors in a supervisory capacity
- Principals, Teachers, Classroom Aides
- Directors and Coordinators and Teachers of Religious Education
- Directors of Youth Ministers, Youth Ministers and Sacramental Preparation Teachers
- Children's and Intergenerational Choir Directors and Musicians
- Coaches, Catechists, Catechetical Aides
- Coordinators of Altar Servers
- Those exercising supervision over a child for any part of a 24 hour day

If you have a question as to whether you are a "Mandated Reporter" under Missouri Law, please contact your supervisor immediately.

Reasonable suspicion requires you to report; you do not need absolute proof before making a report. A report is required when available facts when viewed in the light of the surrounding circumstances would cause a reasonable person to believe a minor has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect.

Steps when you *suspect* abuse and/or neglect

Within 24 hours:

1. You must make a call to the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline at 1.800.392.3738; and
2. Report the suspected abuse to your local law enforcement agency or 911; and
3. Report the Suspected Abuse or Suspicious Behavior to the Diocesan Ombudsman IF:
 - The suspected abuse is sexual and involves or involved a minor, and
 - The suspected abuser is or was an employee, cleric or volunteer in the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph.
 - If the report is outside of the jurisdiction of the OCYP, the Ombudsman will make the referral to the proper authority.
 - The Ombudsman and the Diocese will cooperate fully with law enforcement.
 - No Church Personnel other than the Ombudsman is to conduct any investigation.

Failure of a mandated reporter to report suspected abuse or neglect to the Missouri Children's Division Abuse Hotline is a Class A misdemeanor punishable by law. A person who *intentionally* makes a false claim of abuse is punishable by law. However, a person has immunity from civil liability if they report something they believe to be true, but that after investigation is found to be false.