

DIOCESE OF LINCOLN

PROTOCOLS FOR INTERACTION BETWEEN ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The following protocols govern the interaction at Lincoln Diocese-sponsored events and locations between adults and minor young people. Unless otherwise stated, “adult” means any individual who has reached his/her 19th birthday. All adults, who by their employment or volunteer activity, interact with young people at events or locations sponsored by the Diocese of Lincoln, must read and by their acknowledgement, agree to the following protocols.

1. General Guidelines

- If any adult finds that there is an emotional attraction to or from a minor, this should be recognized, acknowledged, and greater caution and care must be taken in all interactions.
- If any adult believes that he, she or others would be placed at physical or moral risk by participating in a youth event, he or she should withdraw from participation. Emotional attachment can be a danger when interacting with young people. It must be recognized and avoided.
- Clergy and religious should wear clerical attire or the habit of their congregation at all youth events, but may wear special clothing or gear for sports or other analogous activities, if the policies of their superiors or congregation permit.
- At least two lay adults should be present at every youth event involving minors.
- Clergy, seminarians and religious need to be aware of the prominence and power of their role and position, particularly in the Catholic community. They must avoid any inclination to use that prominence and power of their role and position to influence others inappropriately, and be aware that some others may be inappropriately attracted to them because of that prominence and power of their role and position.

2. General Protocols

- *Physical Contact:* Gratuitous physical interaction with minors by adults is to be entirely avoided. This includes: corporal punishment, any inappropriate touching; any kind of wrestling or “play” fighting; hugs; arms around minors, even in pictures; squeezing of the shoulder of a minor or other person; putting one’s hand around the waist of a minor; kisses or ‘pecks’, even that one may consider as innocent; holding hands to show affection.
- *Gestures:* Any immodest or questionable gestures, looks or signals, even in fun, is always inappropriate and is to be entirely avoided.

3. Language

- The kinds of words or language to be avoided include: abusive language, words commenting on bodily appearance, clothing, jewelry etc.; off-color jokes, vulgar, suggestive, teasing or impure words; comments with sexual innuendoes or “double meanings”; inappropriate expressions or terms of endearment which could be misunderstood, e.g., “dear”, “honey” etc.
- Comments or moral instructions regarding sexual matters to individual minors should be made only in response to a specific question, never introduced, and should be professionally worded and general in character.
- In general, laypersons, rather than clergy, seminarians or religious should be directed to give corrections to individual minors regarding immodest dress.

4. Chaperone Duties

- Youth group trips should have a ratio of one lay adult chaperone to 8 minors to preclude the necessary and personal involvement of any clergy, seminarians or religious.
- An adult (parents or guardians excepted) should never drive or be in a vehicle alone with a minor.
- Adults (parents and guardians excepted) involved in Diocesan sponsored events should:

- Never make an overnight trip with a minor alone.
- Never share a bed or even a room with two beds with a minor.
- Never be alone in the same room where minors are changing clothes, donning swimming suits or taking showers. Schedules should be arranged so that adults and minors are never in these situations together.
- Never intentionally be the only adult with a minor in a restroom.

5. *Athletics, Camp Activities, Field Trips, and Overnight Activities*

- Games or sports activities with minors require the presence of at least two adults.
- “Pep-talks”, or even prayers before or after sporting events in clothes-changing areas should be held with at least one other lay adult present.
- Clergy, seminarians or religious are never permitted to dance, even group dances.
- Clergy, seminarians or religious will always maintain a professional manner and socialize with minors only in the presence of and along with other adult team members.
- Clergy, seminarians or religious may never participate in “mosh pit” activities, such as passing people over a crowd. These practices are never to be done and should be halted by any adults present should they occur.
- Clergy, seminarians or religious may never sleep in the same tents, cabins or other designated sleep areas with minors. In general they should not stay on site, but at a nearby rectory or convent if possible. No fewer than two lay adult chaperones may sleep in the same areas as minors.
- Adults may swim with minors as long as other lay adults are also present. Swimwear is to be modest. However, no physical contact or participation in physical water games is permitted.
- An adult should never be present alone with minors in a clothes-changing area at a swimming facility.
- Play activities on land or in the water must never involve physical contact or acts of aggression (wrestling, dunking, deliberate tipping of a canoe, water fights, water guns etc.).
- Bed checks and “lights out” duties must be conducted by lay adults; never by clergy, seminarians or religious.

6. *Personal Conferences with Minors*

- One-to-one meetings with a minor must be done in an area in full view of other adults.
- When meeting in an office or other room, the door must either have a viewing window or be left open and another adult must be notified about the meeting.
- Face-to-face Confession behind a closed door should be avoided and certainly should involve no physical contact between the priest and penitent. Because priests always have the right to hear confessions only behind a screen, at least portable or makeshift screens must be available for every priest asked to hear confessions.

7. *Reading Material/Videos/Internet*

The Diocese of Lincoln cooperates fully with the Children’s Internet Protection Act which requires implementation of Internet safety polices addressing:

- access by minors to inappropriate matter on the Internet;
 - the safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms and other forms of direct electronic communications;
 - unauthorized access, including so-called “hacking,” and other unlawful activities by minors online;
 - unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal information regarding minors; and
 - measures restricting minors’ access to materials harmful to them.
- Abuses are to be reported to: CyberTipline – <http://www.cybertipline.com> (Nebraska State Patrol)
- Never provide or show reading materials, pictures, or videos that are inappropriate, or even questionable, to minors.

- Electronic and/or digital communications with minors may be conducted for educationally appropriate purposes and only if it is through a school/parish-sanctioned means of communication.
- Communication through technology should be treated the same as communication in face-to-face interactions; language that might be misinterpreted should be avoided.
- Nothing should be communicated between an adult and a minor that could not be said face-to-face with parents present.
- All online communications should be treated with the same degree of attention as would be given to a media interview or legal testimony.
- No web content or digital communication, outside of Diocesan approved parish/school websites, may contain personal information such as personal phone numbers, addresses, e-mail addresses or other specific information.
- "Friending" someone under the age of 19 using a personal profile on any social networking site using a personal account is prohibited. If communication with youth through a social network is necessary, create a fan page, blog or professional profile that is used only to inform youth and parents of important information regarding non-curricular activities and events. Be sure to have more than one administrator that is able to edit or remove content on any such page. No digital communication between adults and minors should be one-to-one.
- There is to be no unauthorized disclosure, use or dissemination of personal information regarding minors without express parental consent. Identifying of individuals (i.e. "tagging") is not allowed.
- Any behavior of an employee or volunteer who chooses to associate him or herself with the Diocese, parish, or school on any social network must reflect positively upon the Catholic faith, the Diocese and the parish or school. Negative or unjust portrayals of school or persons associated with the school, on any website (including social networking sites), will be subject to disciplinary measures.

8. Alcoholic Beverages:

- Alcoholic beverages must never be taken to or consumed on trips involving minors.

9. Drug Use:

- Any adult using any drug that impairs judgment may not supervise minors.
- Adults may not provide or share any prescription or non-prescription drugs with a minor without written parental/guardian permission.

I have carefully read and I agree to fully observe these PROTOCOLS FOR INTERACTION BETWEEN ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE in the Diocese of Lincoln.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Revised: 9-20-12