



## **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.

### **Adherence to existing laws, standards & codes of conduct**

All communication of clergy, employees and volunteers (referred to as "ministry representatives" in this document) of the Diocese of Green Bay with minors and individuals at risk should comply with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (<http://www.ftc.gov/ogc/coppa1.htm>), and 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](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 with others at all times.

### **Mandatory reporting**

Ministry representatives must immediately report any form of communication they receive which indicates existing or imminent harm or danger to any individual.

The content of the communication must be reported to parish leadership, civil authorities and the Diocesan Assistance 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 leaders and volunteers representing the Catholic Church 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.

A parent or guardian must complete the ***Parental Statement of Intent*** before any ministry representative may engage in any electronic communication with any minor or individual at risk, with whom they have any connection because of their ministry. Any educator, catechist, coach, youth minister or other representative of any parish, school or organization in the Diocese of Green Bay is responsible to have the signed ***Parental Statement of Intent*** on file at the local level, and it must be renewed on an annual basis. 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 minor or individual at risk without a parent or guardian having granted permission (selecting "Yes, I authorize") to do so in the ***Parental 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 minors or individuals at risk.

All ministry representatives must agree to all communication between themselves and any minor or individual at risk being 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 minors and individuals at risk.

Ministry representatives 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 request and review communication between their child or individual at risk, and ministry representatives in its various forms. It is up to the individual parish, school or organization to determine the form and standards in which this is made available to individuals.

### **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 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 individual into 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 Diocesan Assistance Coordinator, 920-272-8174.