

Diocese of Davenport  
Electronic Communication With Minors Policy

The following policy and procedures apply to all clerics, adult employees, and adult volunteers of Diocese of Davenport entities. The Diocesan safe environment policies and procedures remain in effect.

Appropriate and ethical boundaries must always be observed when communicating with minors including, but not limited to, video conferencing, the Internet, online services, e-mails, instant messaging, online bulletin boards, social networking sites, social media, text messaging, podcasts, blogs, and electronic chat areas. Any form of communication that is intended to inappropriately manipulate a minor or that incorporates any suggestive language, suggestive photos, sexual innuendos, inappropriate personal self-disclosures, etc., is forbidden. This includes visual, digital, or electronic communication in any format. Inappropriate and emergency communication must be reported to a supervisor immediately.

Chats should take place only in a manner that all those attending the session can view the chat dialogue. If an adult presenter must communicate electronically with a student in private, either another adult must be present, or the complete transcript of the chat must be available for a parent or guardian to review. Electronic communication to minors should be sent using an organization account and must either include a parent, guardian or second adult, or recorded in a way that can be reviewed by a parent or guardian.

#### Virtual Sessions

Links or connection information for virtual sessions with minors must not be posted online, for example, on websites or through social media. Information about the session, including the date, time, and reason for the session, must be shared in advance with a parent or guardian of each minor in the session. Each school session for which only one adult and one minor is present must be recorded and retained so that it can be reviewed up to 30 days from the end of the session by school administrators, parents or guardians following the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations. Parishes are not required to follow FERPA regulations. Parish sessions for which only one adult and one minor is present must be recorded and retained so that it can be reviewed up to 30 days from the end of the session by parents or guardians and the pastor or his designee. If a second adult or a second minor is present in either school or parish sessions, recording is not required. The second adult must have completed the diocesan requirements for safe environment training and background checks.

Session attendance should be limited to those invited by using passwords, passcodes, registration or waiting rooms as part of the invitation. Students must be given the opportunity to join with only an audio connection to the session if the student cannot connect to the session using video.

Sessions should originate from a professional setting such as a classroom or home-office with nothing inappropriate displayed. Everyone on the session should be dressed appropriately. Sessions should occur between normal school and parish hours as determined by each entity. The Internet and equipment capabilities of the participants should be considered to avoid the need to use cell phones.

No one may enter the session until the instructor/moderator begins the session. A waiting room may be used for participants before the session begins. Everyone should leave the session once the instructor/moderator ends the session.

Questions regarding this policy may be directed to the Diocesan Superintendent of Schools for school issues or the Chancellor for other entities.