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CHAPERONE POLICY OF THE DIOCESE OF CAMDEN

Approved 1 June 2007
Revised 28 March 2014

This Policy applies to the Diocese, parishes, schools and all other entities affiliated with any of these and governs minimum chaperone requirements for all field trips, trips, athletic events, and other activities organized for minors at a location away from, respectively, the parish, school, or the primary location for group activities. This Policy also applies to locations operated by the Diocese, parishes, schools, or any other entity affiliated with any of these which are the destination of trips involving minors from within or outside the Diocese and to all overnight activities involving minors at those locations.

I. **Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People**

In 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (“*Charter*”). Two articles in the *Charter* concern adults who have regular contact with minors.

A. Article 12 of the *Charter* provides that dioceses are to maintain “safe environment” programs in cooperation with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children. It also provides that dioceses are to make clear to clergy and to members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons in position of trust with regard to children.

All adults who have regular ongoing contact with minors will attend at least one child assault prevention session every five years. The Diocese of Camden will select the provider(s) and program(s) to be offered.

B. Article 13 of the *Charter* provides that dioceses will evaluate the background of all diocesan, parish and school personnel who have regular contact with minors utilizing the resources of law enforcement and other community agencies.

The *Diocese of Camden Policy Regarding Criminal History Background Checks for Employees and Volunteers Who Have Regular Contact with Children or Young People* governs when a background check is required for chaperones and how background checks are conducted and evaluated. Questions concerning background check requirements are to be directed to the Office of Child and Youth Protection.

- C. Regular contact with minors is not defined in a purely quantitative manner; it is not a specific amount of time per week or per month. It is, rather, customary or recurring association or interaction. A once-a-year event, for example, would not be considered to constitute “regular contact.” Serving as a chaperone two or more times within one year (July 1 – June 30) shall be considered “regular contact.”
- D. **All chaperones for overnight activities are considered to have regular contact** and are subject to the *Diocese of Camden Policy Regarding Criminal History Background Checks for Employees and Volunteers Who Have Regular Contact with Children or Young People*.
- E. A minor is an individual who has not yet attained his/her 18th birthday, or someone older than 18 who habitually lacks the use of reason. For purposes of this Policy, **all students in secondary schools, including those who are over 18 years of age, are considered minors** and this Policy applies to them.

II. Chaperone Requirements

- A. Chaperones who are employees of the sponsoring entity must be 21 years of age or older; all other chaperones must be 25 years of age or older. For international trips, all chaperones must be 25 years of age or older.
- B. Every activity will have at least two chaperones, one of whom must be at least 25 years of age. For overnight activities, if both genders of youth are present at the activity, there must be at least one chaperone of each gender. For single-gender groups, there must be at least one chaperone of the same gender as the youth.
- C. No chaperone should ever be alone with a minor. If a situation should arise where a chaperone must be alone with a minor, then both the chaperone and the minor are to always be completely visible to another adult. (An exception may be made for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.)
- D. The minimum number of chaperones shall be as indicated in the table below. These are minimum requirements. The person in charge of organizing or approving the trip should consider the nature of the trip and the needs of the particular youth attending to determine if additional chaperones are needed for all or part of the trip.

| Minors' Age No. of Minors | Pre-School | Grades K-5 | Grades 6-8 | 9th Grade and Over |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| up to 5 | 2 chaperones | 2 chaperones | 2 chaperones | 2 chaperones |
| 5-10 | 3 chaperones | 2 chaperones | 2 chaperones | 2 chaperones |
| 11-15 | 4 chaperones | 3 chaperones | 2 chaperones | 2 chaperones |
| 16-20 | 5 chaperones | 3 chaperones | 2 chaperones | 2 chaperones |
| 21-25 | 6 chaperones | 4 chaperones | 3 chaperones | 3 chaperones |
| 26-30 | 7 chaperones | 4 chaperones | 3 chaperones | 3 chaperones |
| 31-35 | 8 chaperones | 5 chaperones | 3 chaperones | 3 chaperones |
| 36-40 | 9 chaperones | 5 chaperones | 3 chaperones | 3 chaperones |
| over 40 | + 1 chaperone for each additional 5 minors | + 1 chaperone for each additional 10 minors | + 1 chaperone for each additional 20 minors | + 1 chaperone for each additional 20 minors |

- E. In some cases, the institution, facility or site being visited may have additional requirements or guidelines concerning the chaperoning of minors. In such a situation, the requirements and guidelines of the institution, facility or site will be followed, in addition to the requirements of this Policy.
- F. Nothing in this Policy is intended to preclude parents who are not themselves acting as chaperones from accompanying their children on permitted trips; provided, however, that such parents must comply with the provisions of Sections I.C, I.D, II.C, and IV.B of this Policy.

III. Permitted Trips

- A. Elementary Schools: Elementary schools may provide students with enrichment opportunities through properly approved field trips that have a primarily religious, educational, or athletic purpose. Overnight trips are generally not permitted. Exceptions to the overnight prohibition may be made, on a case-by-case basis, for good reason, as determined by the Superintendent of Catholic Schools.

- B. Secondary Schools: Secondary schools may provide students with enrichment opportunities through properly approved field trips that have a primarily religious, educational, service, or athletic purpose. Properly approved overnight trips for secondary school students are permitted, provided there is a clearly stated religious, educational or service purpose.
- C. Parish Youth Ministry and Religious Education: Parish youth ministry and religious education programs may provide opportunities for youth to participate in properly approved activities which require travel. Overnight trips are only permitted for youth in grade 8 and above. These activities may serve spiritual, educational, athletic, or cultural purposes.
- D. All Other Groups and Organizations: Other groups and organizations (including parish groups not covered by part C above) may provide youth with opportunities to participate in activities which serve one or more of the organization's spiritual, educational, or charitable purposes and which further the group's or organization's mission. Trips are permitted, provided there is a clearly stated permissible purpose which meets these requirements. All trips must be approved by the pastor (for parish activities) or the Director of Youth, Young Adult & Campus Ministries (for diocesan and other non-parish activities).

IV. **Retreat Houses and Spirituality Centers**

- A. The chaperone requirements stated in this Policy and in the *Diocese of Camden Policy Regarding Criminal History Background Checks for Employees and Volunteers Who Have Regular Contact with Children or Young People* apply to all groups with minors, whether those groups come from within this diocese or from outside this diocese.
- B. No employee, volunteer or chaperone should ever be alone with a minor. If a situation should arise where an employee, volunteer or chaperone must be alone with a minor then both the adult and the minor are to always be completely visible to another. (An exception may be made for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.)
- C. Chaperones must remain on the premises – or with the group if the group leaves the premises as part of the program – at all times. If staff members are available and satisfy the requirements of this Policy, they may function as chaperones.