

Best Practices for Adults Who Work With Minors
*For Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Candidates for Ordination,
Pastoral Ministers, Administrators, Staff, and Volunteers*

As children are the most important gifts God has entrusted to us, the Diocese of Evansville is committed to safeguarding minors, which are persons under eighteen (18) years of age.

Two-deep leadership

Two “approved” adult leaders or one approved leader and a parent or legal guardian of a participant, both of whom must be twenty-one (21) years of age or older, are required for all parish/school sponsored youth activities. The parish/school is responsible for ensuring that sufficient leadership is provided for all activities.

“Approved” means that the Pastor/Priest Delegate knows the person and approves him or her, the person has had youth protection training, and the person has submitted to a criminal history background check.

Two-deep leadership includes, but is not limited to, transporting minors in approved transportation vehicles for non-Catholic School youth activities, such as church mission trips. This does not apply to situations where the driver is the parent or legal guardian of all the minors in the transportation vehicle.

No one-on-one contact

One-on-one contact between adults and minors is not permitted. In the rare situations that require personal conferences, the meeting is to be conducted with the knowledge and in view of other adults and minors.

- Note: Professional Mental Health Counselors, who are required to follow the Ethical Code of their professional discipline, State licensing requirements, and State legislation regulating professional conduct, may conduct one-on-one private counseling sessions. The term “Professional Mental Health Counselor,” as used herein, means a person with a master’s degree in a recognized mental health discipline, who is licensed, or supervised by a licensed professional, and is employed by Catholic Charities, Diocese of Evansville or is officially approved by the Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Evansville to provide services on school premises.

No one-on-one contact also applies to digital communication, such as text messages and emails. Adults may not have one-on-one private social media communications or engage in one-on-one in other digital activities with minors. Furthermore, in accordance with the Diocese of Evansville Social Media Policy:

- Before posting pictures of a minor or communicating with a minor electronically (which would include online social media platforms like Facebook as well as email and text messaging), the adult must gain written permission from the minor’s parent or legal guardian. Catholic schools gain this permission by including language in the Parent/Student Handbook which is signed by all parties.
- Parents/legal guardians must have access to everything provided to their children.

Parish/school officials shall also have access to digital communications shared with minors.

Respect of privacy

Adult leaders must respect the privacy of minors and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require. Adults must protect their own privacy in similar situations.

Separate accommodations

When staying overnight, no minor is permitted to sleep in the room of an adult other than his or her own parent or legal guardian. Unless rooming with their own parent or legal guardian, male and female minors shall room separately.

Proper preparation for high adventure activities

Activities with elements of risk should never be undertaken without proper preparation, equipment, clothing, competent supervision, and safety measures.

No secret organizations

The Diocese of Evansville does not recognize any secret organizations as part of its program. All aspects of the youth program are open to observation by pastors, parents, legal guardians, and leaders. Even in cases of closed membership (i.e., TEC) parents, legal guardians, and pastors MUST be admitted at any time to observe the program.

Appropriate attire

Proper clothing for activities is required. Modest dress is always required. Guidelines for appropriate attire for a given activity should be written and stated before all youth functions.

Constructive discipline

Discipline used in youth ministry, educational, and catechetical ministry should be constructive and reflect the Church's values. Corporal punishment is never permitted.

Hazing is prohibited

Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited and may not be included as part of any activity. Adult leaders must monitor and guide the leadership techniques used by youth leaders and ensure that diocesan policies are followed.

No expensive gifts or special privileges

Adults shall not give or accept expensive gifts, or special privileges, to/from minors or their parents/legal guardians without the prior written approval from the Pastor/Priest Delegate.

<p>NOTE: Other Diocese of Evansville departments, such as the Catholic Schools Office, the Office of Catechesis, and the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry may have additional code of conduct requirements for their respective ministries.</p>
