

**Chaperone Policy of the Diocese of Camden:
Adult to Minor Ratios
for Field Trips and Overnight Events**
(Approved 1 June 2007)

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* are in regard to adults who have regular contact with minors.

A. Article 12 – Safe Environment Programs

Article 12 of the *Charter* provides as follows: Dioceses/eparchies will establish “safe environment” programs. They will cooperate with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth parents, ministers, educators, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children. Dioceses/eparchies will make clear to clergy and all members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons in position of trust with regard to sexual abuse.

The Diocese of Camden has selected the NJ Child Assault Prevention Program (“CAP”) as its safe environment program for adults in regular contact with minors. All adults who have regular ongoing contact with minors will attend one CAP session once every five years.

B. Article 13 – Criminal History Background Check

Article 13 of the *Charter* provides as follows: Dioceses/eparchies will evaluate the background of all diocesan/eparchial and parish personnel who have regular contact with minors. Specifically, they will utilize the resources of law enforcement and other community agencies.

Every adult in regular contact with minors and all members of the clergy and religious must have a criminal history background check. The Diocese of Camden checks criminal histories as follows:

1. Parish staff and parish volunteers.

These individuals go to the Safe Environment Coordinator at the parish who will then direct them to the location where fingerprints are done digitally. Results are sent to the Office of Safe Environment

for Children, Youth and Adults (“Safe Environment Office”).

2. School volunteers.

These volunteers are checked in the same way as in #1.

3. School employees.

These individuals are checked in a similar manner but go through the school principal first. New Jersey state law applies to school employees hired in 1990 and later. For more clarification on school employees, contact the Safe Environment Office.

C. Regular contact with minors.

Regular contact with minors is not defined in a quantitative manner. It is not a certain amount of time per week. Regular contact with minors is simply that—regular, ongoing contact. A once-a-year event is not considered to be regular contact.

Erring on the side of caution is preferable. Performing a criminal history background check on an individual is preferable to not doing one for the sake of the safety of the children.

An overnight night experience is a different matter from a once-a-year event and is addressed in Section VI of this Policy.

D. Definition of a minor.

A minor is an individual who has not yet attained his/her 18th birthday. For purposes of this Policy, all students in our secondary schools are considered minors and this Policy applies to them.

E. Safety of minor, adult and institution.

This Policy is written for the purpose of the safety and protection of the minor. This Policy is also intended to provide for the safety and protection of the adults involved and the diocesan institution responsible for the activity.

II. Parish Youth Ministry and Other Youth Programs

Youth Ministry programs may provide opportunities for youth to participate in activities which require travel and/or overnight stays. These activities may serve spiritual, educational, athletic, social or cultural purposes.

Religious Education programs may provide opportunities for retreats or pilgrimages.

A. Guidelines required by the site.

In some cases, some institutions may already have requirements for the adult to minor ratio. For example, a museum may require one adult per ten

students. The Youth Group will at least match and preferably do better than the requirements of the location.

B. Forms.

Available from the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry or the Office for Religious Education are forms that can be found in the Diocesan Policy Manual. These forms begin with Article XXIII – No. 5, page 266, which addresses field trips. The forms are as follows:

1. Form XXIIIA: Checklist
This is used as a guide in planning activities involving travel.
2. Form XXIIIB: Activity Request
This is signed by the Pastor who approves the activity and who keeps the original in his office.
3. Form XXIIIC: Parental Permission and Release of Liability
This is required for each minor. This form is used for general activities which do not pose any particular risk of harm or unusual danger.
4. Form XXIIID: Parental Permission and Release of Liability for Activity Involving Risk or Danger
This is required for each minor. This form is used if the trip includes activities that are risky or dangerous, including but not limited to sports, swimming, boating, other water activities, rock climbing and skiing.
5. Form XXIIIE: Volunteer Driver Information
Use of public, licensed carriers or school buses is encouraged. If private vehicles are to be used, this form must be completed and signed for each driver and for each vehicle. Drivers of private vehicles must have passed the criminal history background check and must have attended CAP.
6. Form XXIIIF: Medical Information and Consent to Medical Treatment
This is required for each minor. This form will be returned *prior* to the activity and if the activity includes travel, *prior to the day of departure*. The lead chaperone will carry a copy of each form and each form must always be readily accessible.

C. Adult to minor ratios.

If there are no pre-established guidelines from the site of the field trip, the youth group will use the adult to minor ratios as follows:

1. Chaperones must be 21 years or older.
 - a) For international trips, chaperones must have reached their 25th birthday before the start of the trip.
2. Every activity will have at least two chaperones. If both genders of youth are present at the activity, both genders of chaperones will be present.

3. No chaperone is to be alone with a youth. If meeting one on one, measures will be taken that there be an open door and another adult on the premises.
4. For youth in Grade 8 and below, there will be two adults for the initial seven youth and one adult per each additional ten youth.
5. For youth in the high school, there will be two adults for the initial ten high school youth and one adult per each additional ten youth.

III. **Elementary School Trips**

Elementary schools are allowed to provide students with enrichment opportunities through field trips that have a primarily religious or educational purpose. Trips which are primarily for entertainment, such as trips to amusement parks are not permitted. In general, overnight trips for elementary school children are not permitted. However, exceptions to the overnight rule may be made on a case-by-case basis for good reason as determined by the Office of Catholic Schools. See also Section IV.

A. Guidelines required by the site.

In some cases, some institutions already have requirements for the adult to minor ratio. For example, a museum may require one adult per ten students. The elementary school will at least match and preferably do better than the requirement of the location.

B. Transportation to the site.

Transporting students in a private vehicle is strongly discouraged. It is preferable to use public, licensed carriers or school buses. If this is not feasible, Form XXIIe is available in the Elementary School Policy Manual or from the Principal for drivers of the cars. All drivers must have passed the criminal history background check of the Diocese and have attended CAP.

C. Forms.

Available from the Office of Catholic Schools are forms that can be found in the Elementary School Policy Manual. The forms are in the appendix section. The following forms are required for a field trip.

1. Parent Permission Form for Field Trip Participation (Form XXIIa).
Only an original form, not a fax, is acceptable.
2. Informed Consent And Waiver (Form XXIIb)
This is required for each minor. This form is used if the trip includes activities that are risky or dangerous, including but not limited to sports, swimming, boating, other water activities, rock climbing and skiing.

3. Emergency and Health Information.
Teachers will carry the original of each form for each student while on the trip. A copy will be kept in the school office.
4. Volunteer Driver Information Sheet. (Form XXIIe)
An original form for each driver will be kept on file with the principal. The driver must also provide a copy of his/her currently valid driver's license and insurance card.
5. Moderator Field Trip Request (Form XXIIId)
This form is completed by each teacher who is requesting permission for a field trip. It includes details of the trip, transportation, list of chaperones, costs and educational, religious or service purpose of the proposed trip. The principal or designee must sign approval of the trip. This must be kept on file in the school office.

D. Adult to minor ratios.

If there are no pre-established guidelines from the site of the field trip, the elementary school will use the adult to minor ratio as follows:

1. For children in the pre-kindergarten level and kindergarten levels, there will be one adult per every five children.
2. For children from grade one to grade eight, there will be one adult for the first 10 children and one adult for each additional five children.
3. These are minimum requirements. The principal may require additional adults if advisable given the nature of the trip and the needs of the particular youth attending.
4. Due to the possibility of personal emergencies, when a student group has both genders, there will be chaperones of both genders.

IV. Secondary School Trips

Secondary schools are encouraged to provide students with enrichment opportunities through field trips that have a primarily religious, educational or service purpose. Trips which are primarily for entertainment, such as trips to amusement parks are not permitted. Overnight trips for secondary school students are permitted, provided there is a clearly stated purpose as indicated above. Any school planning an overnight trip will submit to the Office of Catholic Schools the Moderator's Request Form (XXIIId) which clearly states the educational, religious or service objectives. This proposal will be received by the Office of Catholic Schools no later than 60 days prior to the beginning of the trip.

A. Guidelines required by the site.

In some cases, some institutions already have requirements for the adult to minor ratio. For example, a museum may require one adult per ten

students. The school will at least match and preferably do better than the requirement of the location.

B. Transportation to the site.

Transporting students in a private vehicle is strongly discouraged. It is preferable to use public, licensed carriers or school buses. If this is not feasible, Form XXIIe is available from the Principal for drivers of the cars. All drivers must have passed the criminal history background check of the Diocese and have attended CAP.

C. Forms.

Available from the Office of Catholic Schools are forms that can be found in the Secondary School Policy Manual. The forms are in the appendix section. The following forms are required for a field trip.

1. Parent Permission Form and Release of Liability (XXIIa).

Only an original form, not a fax, is acceptable.

2. Parent Permission Form and Release of Liability for Activity Involving Risk or Danger (Form XXIIb).

This form is used if the trip includes activities that are risky or dangerous, including but not limited to sports, swimming, boating, other water activities, rock climbing and skiing.

3. Medical Information, Consent to Medical Treatment and Release (XXIIc).

The teacher in charge of the trip will carry the original form for each student while on the trip. A copy will be kept in the school office.

4. Volunteer Driver Information Sheet. (Form XXIIe)

An original form for each driver will be kept on file with the principal. The driver must also provide a copy of his/her currently valid driver's license and insurance card.

5. Moderator Field Trip Request (Form XXIIId)

This form is completed by each teacher who is requesting permission for a field trip. It includes details of the trip, transportation, list of chaperones, costs and educational, religious or service purpose of the proposed trip. The principal or designee must sign approval of the trip. This must be kept on file in the school office. Where the trip includes overnight, a copy of the request form must be sent to the Office of Catholic Schools.

D. Adult to minor ratios.

1. Chaperones must be 21 years or older.

a) For overnight and international trips, chaperones must have reached their 25th birthday before the start of the trip.

2. Every activity will have at least two chaperones. If both genders of students are present at the activity, both genders of chaperones will be present.

3. There will be two adults for the initial ten high school youth and one adult per each additional ten youth
4. No chaperone is to be alone with a student. If meeting one on one, measures will be taken that there be an open door and another adult on the premises.

V. **Retreat Houses and Spirituality Centers**

A. Guidelines.

All employees and volunteers (“staff members”) will meet the requirements of the *Charter*, which means they will pass a criminal history background check and attend CAP. Staff members will be at least 21 years old.

Chaperones from the visiting groups who accompany minors will be at least 21 years old.

The group coming to the retreat house will provide a list of minors and adults to the retreat house at least two weeks before the event.

Staff members will adhere to a “two adult” policy, which means at no time shall a staff member be alone with a minor throughout the course of a retreat. If such a situation arises, the staff member will find another adult. With the exception of the sacrament of Reconciliation, an intervention by a professional mental health clinician or a spiritual director one-on-one sessions which cannot be observed by at least one other adult are prohibited.

For overnight experiences, boys and girls will be lodged completely separately. At least two adults of the same gender will be accommodated with the same gender of the minors to ensure safety and to prohibit minor-to-minor contact of the opposite gender and to ensure the protection of the adults.

B. Adult to minor ratios.

For a one-day event, accompanying adult chaperones must remain on the premises of the retreat house at all times. Staff members, if available, may function as chaperones. If both genders of minors are present, there will be both genders of adults.

For overnight events, there will be at least two adults of each gender per every ten minors.

VI. **Overnight Events**

Whenever there is an overnight experience involving minors, all adults who participate in the event will have passed the criminal history background

check through the Diocese and will have attended CAP. A “pending” background check or an individual who is “in process” without a definitive determination is not acceptable.

This policy applies to any overnight experience that occurs on property owned or operated by the Diocese, a parish, a school or any other entity affiliated with any of these and any overnight experience sponsored, promoted or organized by the Diocese, a parish, a school or any other entity affiliated with any of these wherever the activity occurs.