

Guidelines for Ministering to Youth

REVISED 10-31-2024

Safe Environment

All adult volunteers ministering to youth must be in *current* compliance with the safe environment program of the Archdiocese of Atlanta. To access all requirements, policies, codes, standards, and summaries, go to the diocesan [Safe Environment Compliance](#) page and the [Safe Environment Policy & Procedure](#) page. The [Safe Environment Standards of Conduct Booklet](#) outlines all you need to know when interacting with youth. Some areas of particular interest are highlighted below.

Ministerial Standards when Dealing with Children and/or Vulnerable Individuals **(p.25-33)**

- This document contains, but is not limited to, the following topics: overnight trips, transportation of youth, sleeping arrangements, professional demeanor, communication with youth, movie viewing, use of music, profanity, behavioral guidelines, and sharing of personal stories.

Code of Conduct (p.18-24)

- This document contains, but is not limited to, the following topics: Compliance with the Law, Mandatory Reporting, Incident Reporting, Drugs and Alcohol, behavioral standards, interaction with youth outside of church functions, and Guidelines for the Supervision of Minors.

Social Media Policy (p.47)

- This document contains the Archdiocesan policy in regards to Social Media, defined as “any web-based and mobile technologies which are designed to turn communication into interactive dialogue. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of blogs/wikis, mobile phone, computer and tablet “apps,” message boards/forums, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Vimeo, LinkedIn, Instagram, Tumbler, Snapchat, GroupMe, etc.”

Transportation

The information about insurance requirements for renting and using personal vehicles to transport teens is found through the finance page of the AoA website (<https://archatl.com/offices/finance/insurance/>).

The preference is for two (2) safe environment compliant adults to be in a vehicle with minors. If that is not possible, it is permissible to “caravan” as a group of vehicles. This means that all vehicles stay together while traveling; for example, if one vehicle needs to stop, all vehicles must stop. Then all vehicles would resume travel together.

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Note: No adult is permitted to drive if he or she has had any major driving violations within the past 5 years (i.e. DUI, major speeding violation).

Driver Approval Process

- This gives all the information needed to be approved as a driver, including age and insurance requirements.

Memo - Fleet Auto Insurance Rental Vehicle Required Info

- You must fill out this form if you are renting a vehicle or hiring transportation.

General Guidelines

Adult Volunteers

1. All adult volunteers must be in *current* compliance with the safe environment program of the Archdiocese of Atlanta.
2. No adult is permitted to work with children or youth until this screening is complete and the pastor, or his designated leader, has given his approval.
3. Information on how to obtain and complete this program is available on the [Safe Environment Compliance Page](#) or contact the Safe Environment Office at 404 920-7550.

Faith Formation

4. All adults working with youth are encouraged to be actively involved in continued formation of their own faith.
5. As catechists, all youth ministry volunteers should be working toward Catechist Certification.
6. Catechesis is to be rooted in the Catechism, Dogma, and Traditions of the Catholic Church.

Chaperone Responsibilities

7. Recommended adult / youth ratio:
 - Middle School - 1 to 8 (with a minimum of 2 adults)
 - High School - 1 to 10 (with a minimum of 2 adults)
8. Chaperones should be at least 5 years older than the oldest youth in the group they are chaperoning.
9. The responsibility of the Youth Minister is not complete until all youth are in the care of the parent, guardian, or parent-designee.

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10. In the event of an emergency that requires the absence of the youth minister, a contingency plan must include an appropriate and clear transfer of responsibility to another adult. Notify the pastor of this transfer of responsibility.
11. If there is an accident while you are supervising minors, even a non-emergency accident, an Injury Report must be filled out and sent to Catholic Mutual for their records. You can find the Injury Report on the insurance page of the Archdiocesan website (<https://archatl.com/offices/finance/insurance/>).
12. The Youth Minister and/or chaperones should at all times know the location of the youth for whom they are responsible.
13. Behavior expectations should be outlined in a code of conduct relevant to the event to include boundaries as to where youth are allowed to be, with whom, and at what times.
14. There must be a minimum of two adults at all youth activities. No adult should be alone with a single youth. Contingency plans for emergency situations must take this into account. Such a contingency plan would require more adult support.

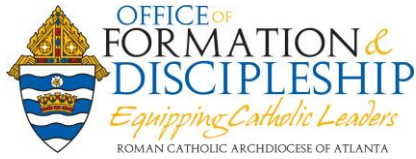
Pastoral Care of Youth:

15. Maintain your role as an adult, not a peer.
 - a. It is acceptable to go to youth sporting events, drama performances, school activities, etc. but not acceptable to go to their parties or social events as if you are one of their peers.
 - b. If a youth seeks advice from an adult, exercise good judgment and follow the [Safe Environment Code of Standards Booklet](#) in this regard.
 - c. Counseling is to be left to qualified and licensed professionals. Serious concerns should be communicated to the youth and his or her parents and documented for parish records.

Permission Slips

These permission form templates are available through the [Waivers and Forms page](#) of the [Archdiocesan Youth Ministry](#) webpage and on the [Office of Communications](#) webpage.

16. [Permission to Contact Youth](#): this form is required to be able to communicate with youth via email, text or social media. E-signatures are acceptable. Available in English, Spanish and Vietnamese.
17. [Annual Media Release](#): This form allows images, interviews and video of children to be used for internal or external communications. Available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese and Portuguese.



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18. [Annual Medical Release](#): This annual form should be kept on file at the parish. A copy should be attached to all permission trip forms when leaving church property.
19. [Permission Slip/Parental Consent Form](#): This form is used for youth events outside the parish setting or overnight events.
20. [Adult Consent & Liability Waiver](#): This form is used for *adults* going on a Youth Ministry sponsored event. This gives you vital information and emergency contacts in the event of an emergency involving an adult chaperone or leader.