

Permission to Contact Youth During COVID-19:

Many are asking what needs to be done to comply with Safe Environment Policies while holding Faith Formation sessions during this time. Here is what you need:

1. A Permission to Contact Youth form current and signed by the parents/guardians needs to be on file for **any** minor child/teen in order for them to participate in online faith formation. The parents should also keep a copy of this form for their files. The [Social Media Policy](#) and [Permission to Contact Youth form](#) can be found [here](#). Please note that an updated [Annual Media Release form](#) should also be on file.
2. If you do not have permission-to-contact-youth-online forms in place for the year, we ask that any catechists reaching out to parents to invite children/youth to an online session be sure the permission form is completed first.
3. PCLs/YMs can mail or email the forms home to be completed by the parents—**electronic signatures are acceptable**. Parents can either scan and send, take a picture and send, or mail the completed permission form back to the PCL/YM.
4. We also ask that two adult catechists be present for every live session that does not include parent participation (if both catechists are not available, we ask that the catechist or PCL arrange for another catechist or VIRTUS-certified parent be present for the full session). If a session is pre-recorded, we'd ask that parents be given access to the material so that they can share with their children. If a parish is offering Family Faith Formation and a parent is present for the duration of the session, only one VIRTUS-certified catechist is required.
5. When using an online/virtual platform for communicating with youth, it should be a platform approved for use by the parish (pastor, parish catechetical leader, etc.). Recording sessions is neither necessary nor advised as a general rule, unless particular circumstances recommend otherwise (e.g., sharing the presentation portion of a faith formation session, sharing the session with families or youth unable to attend the live session, etc.). Just as with in-parish/in-person sessions, if a particular concern arises during a conversation with a youth that needs further attention, catechists/ministry volunteers are required to document it once the session has ended and follow up with their parish catechetical leader. As mandated reporters, if catechists/ministry volunteers have reasonable cause to believe that suspected child abuse has occurred, they are required to make a report to the Department of Child and Family Services (1-855-GA-CHILD) within 24 hours and to notify their parish catechetical leader.