

# **Catholic Mutual... "CARES"**

## **Digital and Online Communication with Youth**

The world has been moving into a more digital and online environment. This would include ministries involving youth. More students utilize a wide variety of online digital and social media platforms as their preferred method of communication. Facebook Live, Instagram Stories, Zoom, GoTo meeting, Cisco Webex, Google Hangouts, etc. are a few of the many platforms being used. Here are some best practices to follow.

### **Video Conferencing should be run on Church/School owned accounts**

It is recommended that the Church/School sign up for a meeting platform account and the ministries of the Church/School be able to utilize that account for all meetings. This will enable advanced meeting control, longer meetings and recording/storage capabilities. Authorized leaders will be provided Host privileges and log-in details to the Church/School account to run a meeting. The paid accounts on Zoom provide more security and capabilities to record and keep that recording. It is also recommended to complete these meetings on a computer or laptop instead of an IOS or Android handheld device.

### **Code of conduct for Adult Participants**

- The location of the recording or live session should be a professional setting such as a classroom or office. It should not be in a bedroom or bathroom. Confirm that there is nothing distracting, inappropriate or distasteful on the background behind you where you plan to complete the video conferencing.
- Adults should be dressed professionally and modestly.
- Outline the rules of conduct for the video conference.
- The adult leader(s) need to be prepared to mute or turn off a video if something is inappropriate. If an inappropriate statement or gesture is made, the adult leader should immediately address with the student and end the session. The incident needs to be reported to the adult leader's supervisor and the parent(s) of the student.
- Set the conference at an appropriate time. If you had a meeting time in the evening or on the weekends when you had the youth group or classes, try and schedule the video conference for the same time frame.
- Individual, private one-on-one communication with students/youth should be prohibited. If Church/School staff needs to communicate with an individual student, the parent or another Church/School staff member should be included in the message.

**Code of conduct for Youth Participants**

- Students need to dress appropriately and modestly.
- Confirm that there is nothing distracting or inappropriate in the background behind the youth.
- Parents are invited and encouraged to attend if they would like.
- Sessions will be recorded for the safety of the participants and the leaders.
- Interaction is encouraged in an organized matter.

**Parents should be clearly informed of the meeting details prior to the event**

Clear communication must be made with the parents regarding video and audio conference meetings at any time. They should be informed of the dates, times and reasons for the conferences. Email or direct phone call communication should be made with the parents. Texting the students about the meeting is not an appropriate way to communicate with youth. Up-to-date email addresses should be obtained for parents. Church/School staff should not collect personal email addresses or phone numbers from students without parent permission. Parents should also be made aware that the meetings will be recorded. The code of conduct for the students can be sent to the parents prior to the meeting. A sample Consent and Release Form is attached.

Please review your Diocesan Safe Environment Policies and protocol for additional direction on how to communicate with students.

(Revised 7/2020)

## CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM VIRTUAL MEDIA FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the Diocese of Yakima continues to serve the children and youth of Parish of the Holy Spirit. Parish program(s) are providing virtual programming and content for its participants, through which staff will facilitate program activities through online platforms. The program(s) will use software, tools and applications provided by third-parties that participants, parents/legal guardians, volunteers and/or staff will access via the internet and use for purposes of communication and programming and potential content creation. These platforms may include but are not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, GoToMeeting, and Zoom. This form provides your consent and release for your child to participate in the program(s) and utilize these online applications for distance-based, virtual program purposes. Please be aware that each application collects different information about its users and has its own privacy terms and conditions to which members must adhere and which Parish of the Holy Spirit or Diocese of Yakima cannot control or assume responsibility. Please review these carefully before registering your child. Our commitment to keeping the children and youth we serve safe is always our number one priority. To that end, we will actively monitor participant activity. All online activities contemplated hereunder must also comply with the Diocese of Yakima Safe Environment Policy.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am the parent or legal guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ . I understand that I will have access to everything provided to my child and be made aware of how social media is being used, be told how to access the sites, and be given the opportunity to be copied on all material sent to my child via social networking. I authorize and consent to staff or other leaders of Parish of the Holy Spirit to communicate with my child electronically, including via social media, email, and video conferencing tools (e.g. Zoom) in accordance with the Program(s). I understand that if any staff or other leaders knowingly communicate privately with my child as a part of his or her duties for or on behalf of Parish of the Holy Spirit, reasonable steps will be taken to send to me the same communication content, though not necessarily via the same technology. I acknowledge that to review or receive public communications shared via social media with my child, I will need to become a fan or follower of the same social media. I understand that communications or posts may be accessible or viewable by others who are also fans or followers of the same social media.

I understand that without this consent my child will not be able to participate in the program(s). If I choose to rescind my authorization and consent provided herein, I agree that I will inform Parish of the Holy Spirit in writing and that my rescission will not take effect until it is acknowledged by Parish of the Holy Spirit. I understand, however, that it may not be possible to recall any work, photos or videos that have been published as part of the program(s) prior to receipt of my written rescission. I have read this Consent and Release Form and have had the opportunity to consider its terms and understand them. I verify that I have read and voluntarily agree to the terms and conditions of the Consent and Release Form – Virtual Media for Children & Youth. I further hereby hold harmless, release and forever discharge Parish of the Holy Spirit

and the Diocese of Yakima and its employees, agents, licensees and legal representatives from, and shall indemnify them against, all claims, demands, and causes of action which I, my heirs, representatives, executors, administrators or any other person(s) acting on my behalf or on behalf of my estate have or may have by reason of my child's participation in the program(s) and through my authorization, consent and release herein.

By providing my signature below, I acknowledge I have read this Consent and Release Form, I fully understand it, and I voluntarily agree to be bound by its terms. I represent and certify that I am the parent or legal guardian of the minor.

Parent/Legal Guardian Name: (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Legal Guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Revised 7/2020)