



DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH

Safe Environment Policy for Parish/School Family Events

Safety standards, including safe environment requirements, apply to all Parish/School hosted or sponsored events, whether on or off Parish/School property and regardless of when the event is held. Only programs and events specifically approved by the parish and diocese may be promoted to minors in diocesan parish and school programs. Adults may not invite or publish invitations from outside organizations or programs except for those specifically approved by parish administration and the Office of Evangelization & Catechesis.

Family Events Which Include Parents/Guardians

Family events where minors remain in the care, custody, and control of their parents or guardians, and where Parish/School personnel are not the designated caretakers for the minors in attendance, do not require a specific adult: child ratio. All individuals who are organizing, assisting, or volunteering for events where children or youth are present are required to be safe environment compliant and must have participated in the required safe environment training, satisfactorily completed a background check, and completed all necessary documentation.

- ✓ Example: There are no additional safe environment requirements for attendees of a parish fish fry where family members attend together, and the children or youth remain in the care, custody, and control of their parents or guardians. For such an event, all sponsors, employees, and volunteers assisting in the event must be safe environment compliant.

If childcare or babysitting services are being provided by the parish or school as a part of the family event, all individuals engaged in providing the childcare or babysitting must be safe environment compliant.

- ✓ Example: Adults who are employed by or volunteer for the parish or school for childcare or babysitting duties must be safe environment compliant. Teen volunteers must have completed the teen safe environment program for volunteers prior to engaging in volunteer work in childcare or babysitting.

Ratios for Adult Chaperones to Children/Youth

A *chaperone* for the purpose of monitoring youth activities is an adult (21+) who has completed diocesan safe environment training and has had an approved background check.

Two (2) or more safe environment compliant adults (21+) must always be present for all events involving minors under the age of 18.

Two (2) safe environment compliant teens (14-17 years old) may assist in supervising children/youth activities, providing they are under the direct supervision of at least one (1) adult chaperone who is 21 years or older.

- ✓ Example: A group of children in vacation bible school may be supervised by one adult (21+) and two (2) safe environment compliant teen helpers (14-17 years old).

This general ratio guideline is a **minimum standard** and it must be noted that some youth ministry events will require a higher ratio of adults to youth. Factors to be considered when determining the appropriate number of safe environment compliant adults necessary to chaperone or supervise an event with children or youth include:

- Age of the children/youth engaged in the event or activity.
- Maturity of the children/youth engaged in the event or activity.
- Type of activity participants will be engaging in during the trip/retreat (e.g., overnight activities require a higher adult: youth ratio (minimum of 3:10).
- Length or duration of activity (longer events 12+ hours require more chaperones).
- Geographic location and any associated risks. International travel will require special considerations and may require additional chaperones.

Young adults (18-20) who have completed all diocesan safe environment requirements including training and an approved background check may *assist* another adult (21+) chaperone to help meet adult: youth ratio requirements. As chaperoning entails having responsibility for discipline and accountability for the group, young adults (18-20) shall not supervise a group of youth alone or in combination with another young adult (18-20) without at least one adult aged 21 or older.

Short (day) events:

Minimum of **2** safe environment compliant adults for every 10 children

*2 safe environment compliant teens (age 14-17) may take the place of one of the adult chaperone **so long as** they are under the direct supervision of an adult chaperone who is 21+ years.

Short Day (less than 12 hour) Events Ratio Chart

Number Range of Children/Youth Participants	Minimum number of required adult (21+ years of age) chaperones
1-19 children/youth participants	2 adult chaperones
20-29 children/youth participants	3 adult chaperones
30-39 children/youth participants	4 adult chaperones
40-49 children/youth participants	5 adult chaperones
50-59 children/youth participants	6 adult chaperones
60-69 children/youth participants	7 adult chaperones
+Continue adding 1 adult for every 10 participants	

12+ hours & overnight events: Longer (12+ hours) and overnight events require a minimum of three (3) safe environment compliant chaperones for ten (10) children or youth.

Overnight events require at least two (2) chaperones of the same sex as the participants.

- ✓ Example: If an overnight event includes 8 girls and 9 boys, then there must be at least two male and two female chaperones for the event to enable safe monitoring of the activities during the overnight event/trip.

12+ Hour & Overnight Events & Trips Ratio Chart

Number Range of Children/Youth Participants	Minimum number of required adult (21+ years of age) chaperones
	<i>*if there are male and female participants, there must be a minimum of two male and two female adult chaperones</i>
1-9 children/youth participants	2 adult chaperones
10-19 children/youth participants	3 adult chaperones
20-29 children/youth participants	4 adult chaperones
30-39 children/youth participants	5 adult chaperones
40-49 children/youth participants	6 adult chaperones
50-59 children/youth participants	7 adult chaperones
60-69 children/youth participants	8 adult chaperones
+Continue adding 1 adult for every 10 participants	

Safe Environment Policy for Day Trips, Overnight Events, Trips, and Retreats with Minors

The following policies and guidelines have been developed to promote the safety and wellbeing of our children and youth while engaging in events, day trips, overnight trips, or retreats organized or sanctioned by parishes, schools, or organizations of the Diocese of Fort Worth.

Day Trips, Day Retreats and Events at Parish or School

Day events involving children or youth to be held at a Parish/School are permitted upon approval by parish leadership.

For day trips and events lasting less than twelve (12) hours, there must be **at least** two (2) safe environment compliant adults for every ten (10) children.

Events and Trips Lasting Twelve (12+) Hours & Overnight Events/Retreats

*A helpful reference guide to overnight retreat requests can be found at <https://fwdioc.org/3.1-short-guide-to-overnight-retreat-requests.pdf>.

Overnight events on parish or diocesan property, including sleeping, camping, or otherwise staying on parish or diocesan property overnight, are NOT permitted at any time.

Overnight Confirmation Retreats are not permitted. Instead, appropriate *Days of Reflection* are better suited both catechetically and pastorally to assist a student to understand the nature, premise, and intent of the sacrament of Confirmation.

Participants in overnight events, trips, and retreats must be high school freshman (9th grade) age 14+.

1. Parishes with perpetual adoration are asked to contact the office of the Vicar General for review of safety procedures.
2. Requests for review of overnight retreats, trips, and other overnight events must be submitted to the Office of Evangelization & Catechesis and the Office of Safe Environment by completing a retreat/event request form at <https://fwdioc.org/diocesan-forms>. The Office of Safe Environment will work in conjunction with the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, the diocesan nurse, and the parishes to ensure that the locations of overnight events meet safe environment requirements to promote the safety and wellbeing of all participants.
 - ✓ The nature of the event must be catechetical, instructional, and pastoral in nature.
 - ✓ A catechetical outline and/or curriculum of the event must be submitted with the request form.
 - ✓ The safe environment status of all chaperones and adult participants must be current and verified with the local safe environment coordinator (SEC).
3. Overnight retreats and events may only be held at an approved location or facility which promotes and meets all safety and safe environment requirements. Approved locations may include Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House, similar facilities, or otherwise approved locations.
 - a) **Hotel Rooms-** When hotel rooms are utilized for overnight events or retreats, the following guidelines must be observed:
 - Boys and girls must be assigned to separate rooms.
 - Youth sharing a room must be of the same or similar age (within 1 year).
 - Chaperones must stay in rooms separate from, but within monitoring range, of youth. Chaperone rooms should be scattered throughout the area near rooms where youth are sleeping, and at least one adult room should be located near the stairs, elevator, or entry. Chaperones shall carefully monitor rooms and areas where youth are located.
 - Children/youth may not share a room with an adult except parents and their child(ren). No other adult and child relative combination may be permitted to share a room (e.g., grandparent/child, aunt/niece).
 - High school students 18 years of age may share a room with similar-aged peers (within 1 year). This exception shall only apply until the youth/student graduates from high school.
 - There may only be **one person per bed**, pullout bed, or cot. There is an exception for siblings with prior written parental consent and for married couples.
 - Wherever possible, there should always be at least three (3) youth per room. In order to accommodate a safe number of youth, pullout beds, roll-away beds, cots, sleeping bags, or air mattresses may need to be utilized.

- b) **Cabins, Retreat Centers, or Dormitory Facilities**- When cabins or dormitory-type rooms are being utilized for accommodating youth or adults, the following guidelines must be observed:
- Boys and girls must be assigned to separate rooms.
 - Adult chaperones must be assigned to rooms separate from youth participants but within safe monitoring distance of the children/youth.
 - Male and female chaperones must be assigned to separate rooms unless they are a married couple.
 - Youth who share a room must be of the same or similar age (within 1 year).
 - There must be supervision by a sufficient number of adult chaperones and youth should have access to seek help from adult supervisors at all times.
 - If participants are sleeping in an open area (such as dormitory-type room) there must be room to allow for sufficient privacy for adults or youth when using dressing rooms or bathrooms.
 - If separate accommodations are not available, such as in a facility with a large, open space to be shared by chaperones and youth participants, the adult chaperones must sleep in an area that is separated from the youth participants even if only by distance.
4. Children/Youth must be given the opportunity to have at least eight (8) hours of sleep each night or 24-hour period.
 5. Respect for privacy for dressing, restrooms, and personal hygiene:
 - Separate facilities should be provided for male and female participants.
 - Separate facilities should be provided for adult chaperones or adult participants.
 - If separate facilities for male and female participants or adult and youth participants is not available, the organizers must provide separate and clearly posted times for each group to use the restroom and showering facilities so that privacy can be afforded to all participants.
 6. For pre-planned checks and limited time to help youth participants during the time they are checking in or checking out, adult chaperones should enter youth rooms or areas in pairs of at least two (2) adults. Other than listed above, adult chaperones should not enter youth or children's rooms or areas except to the extent that health, safety, or behavioral redirection or enforcement is necessary and then only while adult chaperones enter the room or areas in pairs of two (2) or more adults.
 7. One-on-one interactions between adult chaperones and youth must take place in open, public places, in accordance with the *Code of Conduct* and behavior guidelines and with the knowledge of another adult chaperone. One-on-one counseling, spiritual direction, or other interaction cannot take place in a youth participant or chaperone's living quarters.
 8. Adult chaperones and accompanying youth should be kept together as a group to enable adequate supervision. Chaperones cannot delegate their duty to supervise their group or youth to others outside the group except in emergency situations.
 9. Youth participants must always be under the supervision of the chaperones from their own parish, school, or trip, not representatives from other participating groups.