

To: Pastors, Youth Directors, Superintendent of Diocesan Schools and Parish Administrators

From: Brian Lemoi, Director, Evangelization and Lifelong Faith Formation  
Dr. John Cummings, Ed. D., Superintendent of Schools  
Anna Marie Wright, Director, Youth and Young Adult Ministry  
Andre Glaude, Safe Environment Program Manager  
Rick Osorio, Director of Insurance and Risk Management

Re: **Catholic School/Centers, Early Childhood Centers, Faith Formation Programs, Youth & Young Adult Ministry Guidelines for Field Trips and Retreats**

**Effective Date: July 1, 2009**

The usage and definition of the terms **children, youth, and adults, young adults** include the following categories of individuals, who are also defined by the **Diocese of St. Petersburg Policy for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Revised May 2006)**:

**Children, youth, minor:** *Generally, a person less than the age of eighteen (18) years of age. Minors and the combined term "children and youth" are used interchangeably.*

**Vulnerable Adult:** *A person 18 years or older whose ability to perform the normal activities of daily living or to provide for his or her own care or protection is impaired due to a mental, emotional, physical, developmental disability dysfunction, brain damage, or the infirmities of aging.*

In an effort to help maintain a high standard of safety for your staff, youth, and young adults participating in field trips, retreats and camps throughout the year, the Insurance Office, Catholic Schools and Early Childhood Centers, Evangelization and Lifelong Faith Formation, Safe Environment Office and Youth and Young Adult Ministry advise the following guidelines must be followed prior to such an event. Please remember that a field trip for students is a privilege they enjoy and not a right they are entitled to as part of their education and/or experience:

A Field trip sponsored by one of the following programs:

- Catholic early childhood center, elementary or diocesan secondary school, or
- Parish Youth and Young Adult Ministry, or
- Religious Education/Faith formation

should clearly relate to the school's basic curriculum, religious education/faith formation goals or Youth and Young Adult Ministry goals, depending on the program sponsoring the field trip. The responsibility for determining the appropriateness of a field trip and deciding whether or not permission is granted rests with the Principal or pastor, whichever should apply, **who should ensure that there is adequate adult supervision according to the ratios mandated by the sponsoring program and that those entrusted with the care, responsibility or supervision of children or vulnerable adults have complied with diocesan policy relative to Level II background screening and Safe-Environment Training.** If the trip's duration includes a Sunday, the opportunity to attend Mass must be provided for students and adults.

- Before selecting the destination for a field trip, due diligence must be conducted regarding the ownership and management of the facility. This includes knowledge of the physical plant of the facility, as well as the type of activities offered, safety record, and staff ratio as it relates to the activities. Specific activities offered should be within the physical limits and ages of participants attending (e.g. horseback riding, zip lining, white water rafting, swimming, etc.) Facility leadership should not undertake activities that require training or expertise beyond the level of those teachers, volunteers and chaperones in attendance; however, they must remain with participants during any activities at all times even when certified staff of the facility is present.
- A copy of the current insurance certificate for the facility should be obtained, as it relates to both premises liability and liability for the officers, directors, employees and staff of the facility.
- If the facility has an agreement and/or waivers of liability to be signed by the Diocesan entity participating, it should be reviewed and presented to the appropriate Diocesan support office for assistance. The Insurance Office should be consulted with regard to any indemnification provisions. **Agreements should not be signed until the language and provisions in these documents have been analyzed. Unfavorable language may exist that would place the parish and the Diocese in a position of being responsible for all accidents (as defined by the contract) arising from the use of the camp and its activities.**
- Once a facility has been selected, the appropriate school and/or parish consent and permission forms should be utilized by the participants, even if the facility has its own consent forms. It is strongly recommended that both forms be signed by all participants. It should be noted that the facility forms offer consent and protection to the facility, while the parish/school/Diocese consent and permission forms are applicable to the parish and the Diocese. Please contact the offices of Catholic Schools and Centers, Evangelization and Lifelong Faith Formation and Youth and Young Adult Ministry for further assistance.
- The consent and permission form should identify the type of activities and allow parents to withhold consent for specific events. Volunteer leaders/School Staff should assure compliance.
- Volunteer and employees participating and/or supervising the event must be Safe Environment Program trained (certified graduate of the 3 hour course) and who have successfully completed a Level II criminal history background check at least one week prior to the subject trip or activity (Last minute walk-ins cannot be processed in time).

Contracts from potential camps should be reviewed 5 – 6 weeks before an event so that any safety and legal issues can be resolved before an outing.

***Failing to follow these guidelines exposes the parish/school, pastor and staff to liability for claims and expenses beyond those normally associated with a field trip or retreat. Provisions regarding indemnification by a parish or school should not be taken lightly. The Diocesan Insurance Office and Legal Department are available to assist.***

We appreciate your dedication and concern for the safety and well-being of the youth of our Diocese.

If you have any questions or concerns about this advisement, please contact the offices of Catholic Schools and Early Childhood Centers, Evangelization and Lifelong Faith Formation, Safe Environment Office and Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

Thank you.