



# DIOCESE OF LITTLE ROCK

2500 North Tyler Street • PO Box 7565 • Little Rock, Arkansas 72217 • (501) 664-0340 • www.dolr.org

## **Guidelines and Best Practices** **for** **Virtual Classes, Formation, and Ministry with Minors**

The novel coronavirus, COVID-19, has been declared a worldwide pandemic by the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control (“CDC”). COVID-19 is extremely contagious and is believed to spread mainly from person-to-person contact. As a result, federal, state, and local governments and federal and state health agencies recommend social distancing and have, in many locations, prohibited the congregation of groups of people. This has resulted in an increased need for virtual interaction with minors with schools, faith formation and religious education programs, and youth ministry programs in the Diocese of Little Rock.

Because each parish or school situation is unique, the following are not required policies but rather recommended guidelines and best practices for virtual classes, formation, and ministry with minors.

### **A. Live-Streamed Virtual School Classes**

1. All online interactions should be with parents’ knowledge and consent.
2. On-line classes should be recorded by the School (e.g., for quality control and the safety of the students) and should not be recorded by anyone else.
3. Streamings and recordings of the general classroom setting do not constitute a violation of the on-site students’ privacy. The recordings do not become a part of a student’s record—with the exception that if there is a specific incident captured in a recording (e.g., an altercation or other disciplinary action), the recording of that incident that is specific to a particular student may be subject to becoming a part of that particular student’s record. In such a case, the parent of said student may have a right to review the recording and protect it from unauthorized disclosure.
4. All parties should be aware of their surroundings while in virtual classes. Individuals should be in public spaces of their homes and avoid personal spaces (e.g., lying in bed).
5. Treatment of any recordings will be compliant with the school’s data retention and acceptable use policies as well as any pertinent FERPA and COPPA guidelines.
6. Spot checks of recorded and in-progress classes should take place by school or parish officials when possible.

7. Participants in online classes should never be able to chat privately; chats should only occur with everyone in a central chat area.
8. Grid-view should be used and self-view should not be hidden in order to ensure that everyone is shown.
9. Dress, uniform, and grooming habits of on-line students should be the same as for students attending in-person classes and in accordance with current school guidelines.
10. Instructors and students should use their given name (first and last) when signing into the on-line classes.
11. Recordings or screenshots of any on-line classes should not be shared to personal social media accounts. If permission has been obtained from parents for using images of students via social media and/or email, any screenshot of an on-line class should ensure that any names are blurred.
12. The physical location of the recording or live session should be a professional setting such as a classroom or home-office. The physical location should never be an intimate setting such as a bedroom. Teachers who are hosting a live broadcast should check the background for any materials that may be distracting, inappropriate, or potentially offensive, both audio and visual.
13. Teachers should be prepared to mute or turn off the video of a participant if something distracting or inappropriate comes up.
14. Appropriate boundaries should exist between teachers and students so that effective teaching may occur. Teachers are not friends with the students whom they serve. All electronic interaction with students, including two-way video and audio conferencing, should be conducted as if the teacher would be willing to say or give the same response in the presence of that student's parents.

**B. Virtual Classes, Faith Formation, Religious Education, and Youth Ministry**

1. All meetings should have parents' knowledge and at least implied consent prior to connecting with minors. Consent must also be given for the recording of all on-line meetings, and minors must be informed that they may be recorded.
2. One-on-One meetings should be conducted by a Safe Environment ("SE") certified adult, and an additional SE certified adult or parent should also be present during the meeting. Exceptions may be made with parent/guardian consent.

3. Meetings with minors should always be conducted by SE certified adults, and parents/guardians should have access to the meeting. Exceptions may be granted by certified administrators/leaders for guest speakers who are not SE certified.
4. A meeting solution should be utilized that will provide a history of all upcoming and past meetings, allowing access for spot checking/review by SE certified administrators of live and/or past recorded meetings.
5. Meetings should have passwords and/or be private invitations, although this may vary depending upon the solution used (no publicly available links or meeting numbers should be utilized).
6. All participants should be aware of their surroundings while on virtual meetings. Individuals should be in public spaces of their homes; ensure that their surroundings are appropriate; avoid anything in the background that may be distracting, inappropriate, or potentially offensive; and avoid personal spaces (e.g., lying in bed).
7. All meeting dates/times should be pre-scheduled at least 24 hours in advance.
8. All meetings should be recorded by the meeting host for possible future review. Treatment of these recordings will be compliant with organizations' data retention and acceptable use policies. (NB: Due to copyright restrictions, Circle of Grace lessons may not be recorded in advance and then given to the children for review, and any real-time recordings of Circle of Grace lessons may not be distributed or re-used in the future.)
9. SE certified administrators/leaders should be included in all meeting invites.
10. Spot checks of recorded and in progress meetings should take place by SE certified administrators/leaders when possible.
11. A "waiting room" should be utilized, and any "Join before host" option should be disabled. This will allow you to screen who can enter the group.
12. Any option for participants to be able to chat privately should be disabled.
13. Screen sharing should be disabled for anyone other than the host.
14. An additional SE certified adult should be a "co-host," to help moderate the event and in case the "host" gets disconnected.
15. "Breakout rooms" may be utilized with at least one SE certified adult leading each small group discussion. The host should be able to join the various breakout discussions.
16. Grid-view should be used to ensure the video and any recording shows everyone.

17. The time of scheduled events should mimic regularly-scheduled activities at the host location. Exceptions may be granted by SE certified administrators/leaders for special events.
18. Dress and grooming habits of hosts and participants should be modest and in accordance with current guidelines in place at the host institution.
19. Both children and parents/guardians should be reminded frequently that on-line sessions may be recorded for the safety of the children.
20. The host and participants should use their given name (first and last) when signing into the on-line meeting.
21. Screenshots should not be shared to personal social media accounts. If any screenshot or picture is to be shared through institutional social media and/or e-mail, consent must first be obtained and names should be blurred.
22. The host should create standards for effectively managing conversation and share these at the beginning of sessions.