

June 12, 2020

Diocese of Palm Beach Online Ministry and Education of Minors

Creating a Safe Environment Online

The following guidelines should be followed by all entities employing “virtual” online education.

Important: All Diocesan Safe Environment policies remain in effect: background screening (printed and cleared), training (Virtus), and Code of Conduct signed and on file.

* Communicate with students through a school/parish portal or public platform; for transparency always include parents/guardians. Do not communicate through personal emails, personal phones, and/or personal social media accounts.
* Use public platforms sanctioned by the Diocese of Palm Beach. Consult your supervisor.
* Use diocesan/parish/school social media not personal accounts.
* No 1:1, private meetings, texting, or messaging; use online groups only.
* Another cleared adult from parish/school is required in online groups.
* Include supervisor in online group invitations so he/she may drop in.
* Schedule all sessions in advance, copying parent/guardian/supervisor.
* Use safety features such as strong passwords, waiting rooms, no public access, alerts for entry/exit, updated software, lock features.
* Set clear boundaries with students such as office hours, dress code, and language. Intervene if you see or hear anything inappropriate.
* Use professional and formal language when communicating with minors, always copying parent/guardian/supervisor.
* Be mindful of your surroundings and attire. Visual spaces should be appropriate; be aware of your background and what can be seen and heard. Wear suitable clothing.
* If you see or hear something that concerns you, communicate it to your principal/pastor/supervisor. Mandatory reporting procedures also apply to online ministering.
* Diocesan reporting procedures can be found at https://www.diocesepb.org/reporting-abuse.