

DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

Boundaries Training for Adults In-Person Training Curriculum for Parishes and Schools

This Boundaries Training for Adults: Live Training Curriculum is a lesson that may be used at the parish or school level to provide additional training to adults who work with minors. This training is on the topic of boundaries in ministry and is meant to be used as a supplement to the adults' initial child safety training.

The training consists of a Power Point presentation with instructor notes. This Guide provides additional detail and handouts.

Upon completion of this program adults who participate in this program will be able to:

- Define what is meant by “boundaries.”
- Differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate physical expressions of affection towards minors.
- Identify safe ways of communicating with minors that comply with diocesan policy.
- Identify high risk situations and ways to reduce the risk.
- Respond appropriately if they suspect that someone is violating appropriate boundaries by reporting their concerns.

Materials Needed

- ✓ Copies of the Diocese of Manchester *Serving Christ, Serving Others* Code of Ministerial Conduct (available by request or online at: www.catholicnh.org/child-safety/policies/)
- ✓ Power Point Presentation
- ✓ White board or flip chart and markers
- ✓ Handout with scenarios (see appendix)
- ✓ Optional handouts
 - Boundaries for School Staff handout
 - Boundaries for Coaches flyer
 - Boundaries for Coaches infographic
 - Diocese of Manchester Communications Policy
 - Policy for Overnight Trips

Format

This is an instructor-led training driven by a Power Point presentation, which includes instructor notes. The presentation includes the following main sections:

1. Introduction and definition of 'boundaries'
2. Physical boundaries
3. In-person communication boundaries
4. Social Media and texting boundaries
5. Identifying high-risk situations and how to plan for them
6. Reporting concerns

Sections 2-5 include scenarios which are to be discussed in small groups. Be sure to hand them out one by one, not in advance. The handout for each of these sections contains between 1-3 scenario options. You can allow the small groups to choose one. or select the scenario that you feel is most applicable to the group as a whole.

Preparing to teach the lesson

Prior to teaching the lesson, be sure to review the Power Point slides and notes, along with this guide, including the scenarios and handouts (available as attachments to this Instructor Guide). Select which scenarios you want to use and review the instructor notes for those scenarios.

In order to gain a better understanding of why boundaries are so important, instructors may also wish to review in advance the following Diocese of Manchester materials, which can be found at www.catholicnh.org/parents:

- Boundaries Guide for Parents
- Boundaries Guide for School Staff

Additional Slide Notes/Discussion Points

Below you will find additional notes pertaining to some of the slides in the Power Point Presentation. These notes elaborate on the slide content in order to assist the instructor in explaining diocesan policy.

Notes for Slide 10 (Appropriate/Inappropriate Physical Boundaries)

Be sure to mention, especially if questions arise:

- It is important to avoid even the appearance of impropriety
- Giving a small, token gift to all students is fine (for example- pencils, candy, or another small present to students at Christmastime, or reward stickers for a sticker chart), but giving a gift to a single minor, or select minors, is not appropriate
- Location is a factor. Never show affection in isolated locations. For example, a

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celebratory hug on a football field is much different than a hug in a classroom, alone after school.

Notes for Slide 14 (Verbal Communication with Minors)

- Speaking to minors in a respectful manner: The Code of Conduct states: “Church personnel should not use harsh or derogatory language nor should they humiliate, swear, or yell at minors. Never use physical discipline such as spanking, slapping, or hitting. If a minor in your care exhibits uncontrollable behavior, notify your supervisor.”
- Joking around is not a great idea because what one person sees as funny, another person can find offensive. Err on the side of caution. **Never** make jokes or comments about a person’s physique.
- Sexually-oriented conversations. While adults should not typically engage in any sexually-oriented conversations with minors, we also recognize that on occasion, classroom, youth ministry, and sexual abuse awareness training and prevention lessons may address human sexuality issues related to dating, sex, and sexual abuse prevention. All lessons/discussions must convey to youth the **Church’s teachings on these topics**.
- Students in need of counseling: Minors may approach adults with their personal problems. While it’s important to be empathetic, unless you are a counselor, it’s not your job to provide counseling to the student. Refer the matter to the school counselor or principal if you think they need counseling. Parents should also be contacted.
- Isolated locations: If you need to meet or speak privately with a student, do so in as public a location as possible, such as a room with a window. Do not meet up with minors outside of school or church unless it is a parish/school sponsored event.

Notes for Slide 17 (Electronic Communication with Minors)

The **Remind app is a free tool** that can be used for **group communication**. It’s available at www.remind.com.

- You can set up a group and then give the code to your group/team members. Be sure to invite all parents!

- The app masks everyone's phone numbers/contact info.
- Message history is saved and downloadable.

Notes for Slide 18 (Electronic Communication Rules)

- Any time a ministry or group leader is thinking of using electronic communication with a group that includes minors, they need to receive permission from the pastor or principal.
- Electronic communication through apps or social media platforms is only for minors age 14-up. This is due to not only developmental reasons, but also because most social media platforms have an age requirement of 14 years old.
- Volunteers should not set up these types of groups, only employees. For example, a faith formation teacher should not set up a class communication group—this type of communication would come from the Faith Formation Coordinator.
- Parents need to be informed of what type of communication you plan to use, and they must approve any group their minor joins, including text messaging groups. Parents must always have the opportunity to join the group and/or view messages. For example, parents can log on to their students' school accounts and view the email history; or they can join the text group.

Notes for Slide 20 (Electronic Communication Don'ts)

One question that could arise when covering these 'Don'ts' is whether it is ok for Catholic school teachers to email students regarding assignments, etc. This is fine as long as it is done through the school email system. Parents have access to those accounts if they wish to look at the emails.

SCENARIOS

Physical Boundaries Scenarios

Select one scenario for discussion.

Jane & Tia

Jane is a faith formation volunteer assigned to a class of 9th grade students. One of the students, Tia, approaches Jane after class, begins to cry, and tells her that her parents are getting divorced. Jane understands how Tia feels because her own parents got divorced when she was in middle school. Jane sits down beside Tia, rubs her back for a few minutes, and listens while Tia tells her story. Jane tells Tia a little bit about her own experience as a child of divorced parents, and explains that she was really sad, too.

Once Tia has calmed down, Jane offers to meet with her next week after class to further discuss the divorce.

Discussion questions

- ✓ What are some boundary issues at play here?
- ✓ What could Jane do differently?
- ✓ How would you respond in this situation?

Jose

Jose is a summer camp counselor assigned to work with kids in grades 1-4. The children are really cute and some of them are very affectionate. They often greet him with a hug at the beginning of each day and when they're tired, some of the kids ask to sit on his lap. One camper, 9 year old Bin, seems kind of needy and is often clingy with Jose. Bin seems to crave attention: he always wants to sit next to Jose during circle time, and lately he has been resting his head on Jose's shoulder.

Jose isn't totally comfortable with all of these physical interactions, but he isn't sure what to do.

Discussion questions:

- ✓ What did you notice about physical boundaries in this scenario?

- ✓ What advice would you give to Jose about how to handle these situations?
- ✓ What options could Jose implement instead of morning hugs?
- ✓ What should Jose do about Bin?

Instructor Notes- Physical Boundaries Scenarios

Jane and Tia

- The rubbing of a student's back could be misinterpreted by the student or by observers. A more appropriate response would be to sit across from the student and listen attentively.
- The teacher should not discuss her personal issues with the student.
- Setting up a meeting with the student to further discuss her problems is also not appropriate.
- The teacher should notify the student's parent(s) and refrain from counseling the student herself. She should also notify the religious education coordinator to tell him or her what happened.

Jose

- Jose should have set boundaries with the kids from day one. Chances are, he is young, and didn't know how to do this, or didn't think about it. Jose probably would have benefitted from training during his orientation about how to set boundaries
- Alternatives to morning hugs: high fives, fist bumps, handshakes (some teachers come up with special complicated handshake type greetings for kids), words of enthusiasm and welcome
- Jose should not allow the children to sit on his lap
- Jose should speak with Bin to let him know that he appreciates him but he cannot rest his head on his shoulder. Jose could rotate students' places so that Bin isn't always sitting next to him.
- Jose should speak with his supervisor for advice. He may also want to talk with Bin's parents to find out if anything is going on at home.

In-Person Communication Boundaries Scenarios

Select one scenario for discussion.

Amanda

Imagine that you're the parent of a fourth grader, Sam. Sam comes home after school and tells you that he is worried about his teacher, "Amanda." He goes on to explain that the teacher and her boyfriend broke up last night, and her boyfriend kicked Amanda out of the house. Based on this information, you realize that the teacher may be violating appropriate boundaries.

Discussion questions

- ✓ What are some boundary issues at play here?
- ✓ What would you do if you were Sam's parent?

Choir rehearsal

Chris is a recent college graduate and new music minister at both Holy Name Parish and the parish elementary school. Among other duties, Chris is in charge of the children's choir.

A couple of the kids from Mrs. Clark's class are pretty active and sometimes have trouble paying attention. Chris notices that they fool around when they are supposed to be listening and won't stay in their proper places during rehearsals.

After class one day, a couple of the kids told Mrs. Clark that their music teacher is 'mean' but they didn't provide any details. The next week, Mrs. Clark came to pick up her class early from choir practice. As she walked into the church, she noticed that Chris seemed really frustrated with some of the students and was yelling at them. Chris then said aloud to Mrs. Clark, "these kids are being brats. They could use a good talking-to."

Mrs. Clark is becoming increasingly concerned about Chris's class management skills and temperament.

Discussion questions

- ✓ What boundaries are of concern here?
- ✓ How could Chris handle the students' behavior problems better?
- ✓ What should Mrs. Clark do?

Instructor Notes- In-Person Communication Boundaries Scenarios

Amanda

- Teachers and other adults should not allow students/minors to call them by their first name. They should be referred to as Miss, Mrs, Mr., Coach, etc.
- Teachers should not discuss their personal lives with students. They should focus on their role—teaching subject matter.
- In addition, the teacher is discussing a lifestyle which is not in accord with Catholic teaching.
- Sam's parents should contact the principal to report these boundary concerns.

Choir Rehearsal

- Chris may have unrealistic expectations of the students. Even if his concerns are valid, he is handling the situation incorrectly.
- Chris should not use demeaning language with students.
- If he needs help, Chris should report the behavior problems to his supervisor (the principal) and request assistance. He could also speak with the classroom teacher privately to tell her about the problems, get her advice, and seek her help with disciplining the students.
- The students did their part in speaking up about their feelings
- Mrs. Clark likely came to pick up the kids early to see for herself what was going on.
- Mrs. Clark should speak with the principal about her concerns. She may also want to speak personally with Chris about her observations and offer advice, but that is not required.

Electronic Communication Boundaries Scenarios

Select one scenario for discussion.

The Hockey Team

Tyler is the new head coach for the hockey team at St. Margaret High School and wants to find ways to effectively communicate with the players. The team consists of freshman through senior players (ages 14-18). Some of the areas that need to be communicated to the players are:

- Practice dates and times
- Cancelled or rescheduled practices, including last-minute changes
- Game times and details about location, arrival time, and transportation
- Feedback on each player's progress following each game

Tyler is thinking of setting up a team Facebook page and is trying to think of other ways to safely and effectively communicate.

Discussion questions

- ✓ What are some appropriate ways of communicating with the team?
- ✓ Do you think a Facebook group page is a good solution? Why or why not?
- ✓ What should Tyler do if practice is cancelled at the last minute?

Robotics Club

Mr. J and Mrs. P are parents who volunteered to oversee the middle school robotics club. Meetings will take place after school in the church basement, and competitions take place on Saturdays at a variety of locations throughout New England.

Mr. J is very active on social media, especially Instagram and Twitter. He decides to form an Instagram account for the club and sends invites to the club members and their parents. Some of the kids and parents accept his requests, and Mrs. P joins as well.

Following each competition, Mr. J posts pictures of the events and updates on each club members' contribution to the group. The posts are very positive and get lots of likes.

Discussion questions

- ✓ Should Mr. J have set up the Instagram group.? Why or why not?
- ✓ What would be a better alternative?
- ✓ What concerns do you have?

Instructor Notes- Electronic Communication Boundaries Scenarios

The hockey team

- The team consists of students ages 14-18, so group texting would be ok (assuming principal and parents give permission). Parents should be allowed to join the group text, and at least one other coach should be in the group.
- Remind is a good solution for team communication such as what is needed in this case.
- A group Facebook page is allowed as long as it is part of the school's official site and approved by the principal. It might not be the best solution, though, because the kids might not check the page (though their parents might). So, there are pros and cons to this solution.
- Other ideas are to use the school's online calendar on its website, or establish an email group, using the school email system.
- Using group text or Remind should allow last minute notifications if practice is cancelled.
- If some kids show up and the coach is at the field, the coach should call the parents.

Robotics club

- Middle school students might not be 14 years old, so Instagram should not be used to communicate with them
- Adults should not send group invites to minors
- It doesn't appear that Mr. J got the principal's permission to set up an account. As a general rule, volunteers should not set up accounts on behalf of a school or parish. Employees should only do so with prior approval from the principal/pastor.
- Unless it is done as an official duty on an official school/parish account, adults should not post online pictures of minors with whom they work or ministe. If the parish/school posts photos, parental permission is needed, official sites should be used, and students should never be "tagged" (their names should not be displayed)
- A better way of giving positive feedback to club members would be to offer verbal praise

High Risk Events/Planning Ahead for Safety Scenarios

Select one scenario for discussion.

Weekend retreat

The parish youth group has received the pastor's permission to attend an out of state weekend retreat and Darcy, the youth minister, is in charge of all the planning. The group will consist of male and female high school students in grades 9-12. The event is taking place at a college campus, but the group will be staying at a hotel for 2 nights. Darcy needs to plan for the following:

- How many chaperones will she need?
- How will they get to the hotel, and from the hotel back and forth to the event?
- What type of sleeping accommodations will they need?
- What should she do about kids' medications?

Help Darcy with her planning!

- ✓ What would you advise for each of the points above?
- ✓ Are there other things that Darcy needs to plan for?

Bike Trip

Fr. Jim is a young priest who seems to have a gift of working with the youth of the parish. He is in charge of the youth group, and attendance has really spiked since he took over. Fr. Jim has found a great way to engage the teens by bringing them on outings such as hikes and bike rides. He is always careful to have adequate adult supervision at youth group meetings and during the outings.

It's school vacation week, and some of the teens have made plans to go biking on the rail trail. They invite Fr. Jim to come with them on a day that happens to be his day off. Fr. Jim cancels plans he had with a fellow priest in order to go biking with the teens. He asks the father of one of the teens to accompany them since he knows about the "two adult rule." However, when he gets to the meeting spot, he finds out that the teen's father is sick and can't make it. It is a beautiful day and Fr. Jim is torn about what to do.

Discussion questions

- ✓ What do you notice about this scenario?
- ✓ What should Fr. Jim do in this case?

Instructor Notes- High Risk Events & Planning Ahead Scenarios

Weekend Retreat

- Darcy will need at least one male and one female chaperone. She can refer to the diocesan field trip standards to determine if she needs additional adult chaperones, which will depend on how many teens attend.
- It's best to take a bus to the event, or have parents drop off and pick up their teens. If Darcy and other adult chaperones will be drivers, they need to be approved through risk management (Porter & Curtis) and follow all driving rules, including staying together so that there are always at least 2 adults available at all times.
- Darcy can refer to the Policy for Overnight Trips for rules regarding sleeping arrangements and medication distribution. Males and females should have separate sleeping areas, and chaperones must sleep separately from minors.
- Teen participants who are 18 should not sleep in rooms with younger high school students, although they can bunk with similar age peers (e.g., seniors can share rooms even if some are 18 and some are 17).

Bike Trip

- Fr. Jim is popular with the teens. To an observer, it might seem as if he spends a lot of time with minors. Combined with the fact that he cancelled plans with a fellow priest to spend time with teens on his day off, his behavior could appear to be “red flag” behavior.
- He is careful to follow the two-adult rule
- Fr. Jim should not accompany the teens without another adult. It could appear to be improper, especially since it's his day off and not an official parish-sponsored event. All adults need to avoid even the appearance of impropriety in order to protect their reputations.