

GUIDE TO ONLINE ACTIVITIES FOR A SAFE AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Several parishes have organized the re-launch of their pastoral activities, increasingly using digital tools and resources: broadcasting Mass online, coordinating prayer groups or catechetical sessions and even carrying out personal accompaniment virtually.

These tools do offer opportunities to reach out to people and accompany them in their personal growth and faith journeys, but they also present challenges in terms of the well-being, safety and rights of the minors and vulnerable adults for whom these pastoral activities are intended.

It is therefore appropriate to remind all **our employees and volunteers** working in our communities, **whether clergy, religious or lay people**, about the importance of always considering and promoting a safe and healthy environment for all participants in our activities, and particularly those involving minors and vulnerable adults.

Some of the considerations set forth here are included in the **code of conduct of Responsible Pastoral Ministry**, which was originally developed for in-person meetings and activities but remains in effect throughout this period for virtual activities as well.

As we invite ourselves via a digital platform into the young person's or vulnerable adult's environment, it is necessary to bear in mind certain elements in the organization of our online activities.

A – At the time of registration

Ensure that you have informed the parent/ legal guardian and received their prior written or electronic consent.

1. For online activities with minors or vulnerable adults:

(Insert in the registration form and specify the period during which the activity will take place, and/or attach the respective schedules) / (*) Strike out what does not apply

I, the undersigned Mr./Ms. (*parent or *legal guardian's name).....of (minor's name)...., give my permission for my child to participate in the online program/activities conducted by Mr./Ms....., (title)...., **person in charge of the activities** from(Name of the parish/organization)..... for the period of to

2. Concerning the use of videos, photos and screenshots:

(Insert in the registration form) / (*) Strike out what does not apply

Yes, I acknowledge that, within the responsibility of the parish, the person in charge of the activities may record *videos, take *photographs or *screenshots of the online activity. I agree that my child's *photo, *video and *screenshot may be used by the parish on the *website and/or on the *parish Facebook page for the purpose of promoting its activities.

No, I do not give my permission for *videos, *photographs or *screen shots of my child to be taken or used at any time.

Yes, I acknowledge that, if the person in charge of the activities has notified participants that it is not permitted to record, photograph or take screenshots of the online activity, he or she will not be held responsible for the actions of any participants who break this rule.

3. The purpose of taking pictures and screenshots and recording videos must be specified beforehand.
4. When the person in charge of the activity takes a *screenshot, always inform the participants in case someone does not want to be photographed. In this case, ask the participant to turn off their camera.

B – Online access for participants

1. Some of the following preparations must be made known prior to participants' online access. This will necessitate a conversation with **members of your online activity team** as well as **talking to parents**.
2. It is recommended to use a digital platform over which **you can have control** and exercise responsibility personally or through a member of your team **in order to intervene quickly if needed** (e.g. : Zoom, Google Meet, Teams etc.)
3. Ensure that the access link to your meeting is sent only to those recipients known to you or to a member of your team. Avoid mass emailing the link to addresses you do not know.
4. Ensure that the email mailing list is blind copied (Bcc) so that email addresses are not visible.
5. Ensure that the parent/legal guardian knows which platform is being used and at what time the online activity begins and ends, and ensure that he or she is the person who allows the minor to have access to the device.
6. **When logging on**, it is recommended that the minor should identify himself or herself using the name of the parent/legal guardian or log on to the parent/legal guardian's account or an account known to the parent/legal guardian.
7. Participants in an activity must receive the link to access the activity exclusively from the person in charge of the activities.

C – Presence during an online meeting

8. Just as in any in-person meeting, as the person in charge of the activities, you are responsible for fostering a safe and healthy environment for all participants in your online activities.
9. Be sure to remind participants at the beginning about the basic rules for participating in an online meeting (microphones, raising one's hand, responding, etc.).
10. Allow time to repeat instructions and for assisting less skilled participants.
11. During the online activity, it is important for your participants to have available a phone number of a contact person to be reached immediately in case of a problem. This will allow the person to be assisted without interfering with the activity in progress.
12. Remind participants that it is **absolutely prohibited** at any time to record or take photos or screenshots of the activity, whether within the platform or by means of any app or device.
13. Only the person in charge may record or take pictures or screenshots of the online activity **if permission has been given by the parent/legal guardian**.

14. Ensure that all participants **are identified** with their names and that adults are identified also **with their tasks appearing on the screen** (e.g. Aline Bouchard-Technical help; Steve Allen-Catechetical assistant; Denis Gagnon-Parent; Alice Jumont-Speaker, etc.).
15. The person in charge of the activities must take a list of those present, noting the names of the participants, the times and dates of the various sessions conducted, and the length of each session. This information must be preserved.
16. If you take a break during the meeting, check attendance again on your return, noting those who are no longer present.
17. During the online connection, it is **compulsory** for all the adults to have their cameras on at all times.
18. It is recommended that minors keep their cameras on during the entire online meeting.
19. For adults, be sure to work in an appropriate environment with a suitable background. We recommend a simple backdrop.

D – Proportion of adults to minors

20. No adult must ever be alone with a minor at any time or under any circumstances during in-person activities. This rule is also true for any activity online.
21. Any employee or volunteer who has passed the criminal background check and who presents no conflicts for working with minors and vulnerable adults is recognised as a **screened adult**.
22. **It is mandatory that two screened adults** who do not have family ties must be **connected at all times** during online activities with minors.
23. During activities carried out in sub-groups, such as in separate rooms on Zoom, Teams, etc., **one screened adult** accompanied by another person known to the person in charge of the activities, must be present with the minors at all times during the meeting.
24. The parent/legal guardian may be present online with the minors for the duration of the meeting.
25. For technical purposes or depending on the type of activity, the presence of other adults as **assistant or helper** is strongly recommended to ensure that the program runs smoothly.
26. Ensure that both adults in charge of the activity are **the last to remain on the platform** and to conclude the meeting.

E – Behaviour and language online

27. The language and behaviour used during the meetings among participants must be appropriate.
28. The language online includes the option for chatting or conversing. As the person responsible for the activity, insist that the option for chatting and conversing remains **public** to ensure the transparency of the communication among the participants.
29. Screen sharing offers possibilities to build the program together with your participants. Take the time to find out which files will be shared.
30. Online sources of sound or unwanted noise may disturb the meeting, in which case the microphone at your disposal can be muted as needed.
31. Learn in advance how **to intervene personally** on your platform **quickly**, or using technical support, should inappropriate content appear.
32. If an adult or other participant present sees, hears or witnesses inappropriate images, comments or misconduct during the online activity, **the incident must be reported to** the person responsible for the

activity or a trusted adult, which does not preclude the possibility of its being reported to the Director of Youth Protection (DYP).

F – Communication with minors

33. Outside the program, communication with minors **13 years of age and under**, is done only through the parent/legal guardian.
34. Outside the program, for the purpose of their activities, **young people 14 years of age and older** who use social networks may be in contact and communicate with the person in charge of the activity **within a private group**.
35. Ensure that there are always two adults when interacting with one or more minors (14 years of age and older) participating in a group that is meeting on social networks, in order **to ensure transparency in your communications**.
36. Use **your good judgment** as to when, and when not, to intervene in conversations between them.
37. Let the parent /legal guardian know that you are in regular communication with their child through email or social networks for the purposes of the activities.

In this document, we have mainly mentioned activities with minors. These same considerations remain valid for online activities with vulnerable adults.

Code of Conduct:

https://www.diocesemontreal.org/sites/default/files/ressources/archidiocese/pastorale_responsable/General%20Guide_ENG_June2018.pdf

Diocesan guide for responsible pastoral ministry:

https://diocesemontreal.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/General%20Guide_ENG_Janv2020DEF_1.pdf

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