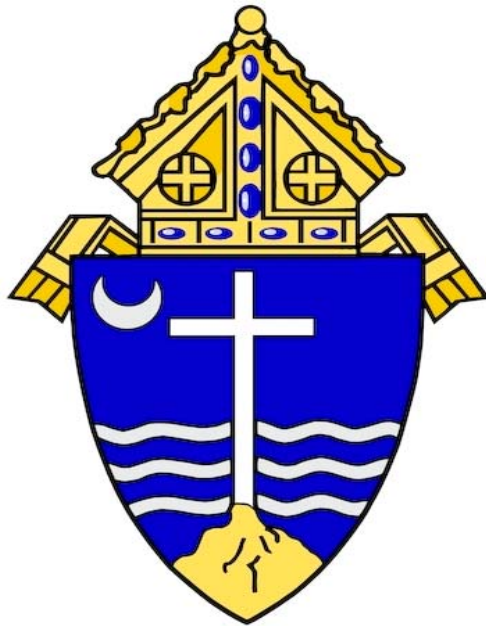


Diocese of Rockford

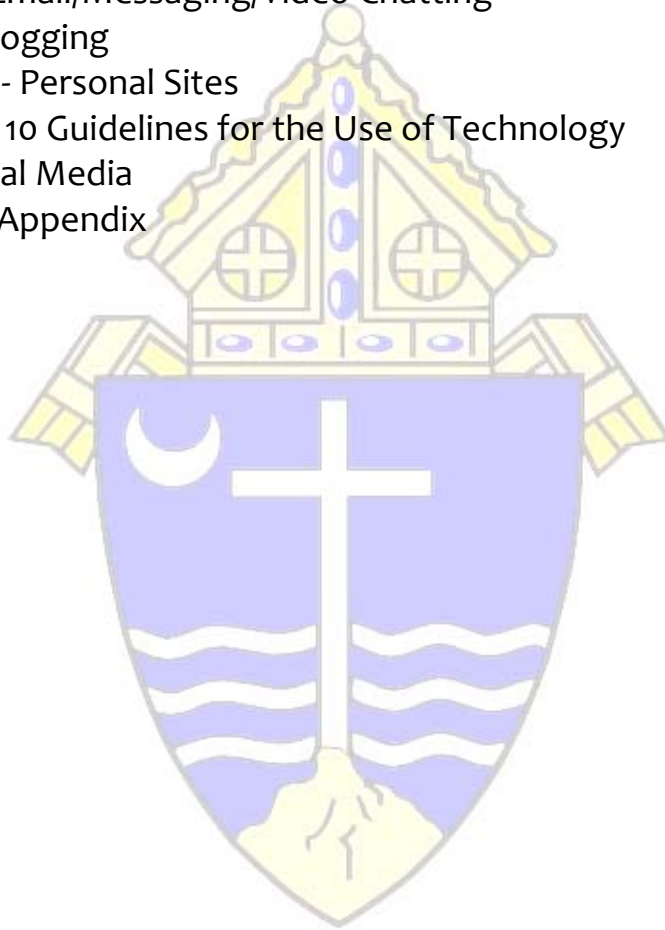


Pastoral Guidelines For the Use of Technology and Social Media

January 2011

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About this Document

This diocesan code provides guidance to personnel on the use of technology and social media. They are guidelines and are not meant to be policy. The goal of this code is to empower personnel in the use of technology and social media and to give clarity, guidance, and best practices in the use of technology and social media.

Use of this code is to reflect the same behaviors as laid out in the “Acceptable Use Policies” from Diocesan Office of Education and the “Diocesan Code of Pastoral Conduct” policies for The Diocese of Rockford.

The use of technology and social media is not simply an issue that affects youth. While technology and social media engagement may vary by generation, our competence in technology and social media will only enhance our ministerial endeavors.

Parts of this Code are adapted from documents of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Diocese of San Jose, the Diocese of Toledo, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Washington, D.C. We are grateful to these entities for their permission to use their documents.



Diocese of Rockford Social Media Communications Committee:

Mrs. Denise Dobrowolski
Web Design and Content Specialist

Mr. John McGrath
Director of Educational Services
Director of Adult Faith Formation

Mr. Matthew Schwartz
Director of Religious Education and
Youth Ministry

Ms. Margo Shifo
Assistant Superintendent of Schools

Mr. Michael Kagan
Assistant Director of Educational Services
Superintendent of Schools

Mrs. Penny Wiegert
Director of Communications and Publications

Mr. Robert White
Director of Information Technology

Section One – Introduction

This Code for the Pastoral Use of Technology and Social Media is designed to aid all employees and volunteers of the Diocese of Rockford, and all diocesan parishes, schools, institutions and other diocesan entities (hereinafter referred to as *personnel*) in understanding appropriate usage, boundaries and best practices in technology and social media.

Jesus walked among us. He listened. He spoke. He told stories and spoke in parables. He shared meals. He touched and was touched. He healed others with forgiveness, a touch, and/or a vocal command. Jesus is the fullest experience of God being in relationship with us. We who desire to communicate God’s love for others and be disciples of Jesus must recognize the importance of this task.

The world of digital communication, with its almost limitless expressive capacity, makes us appreciate all the more Saint Paul’s exclamation: “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1 Cor 9:16).—Pope Benedict XVI, 44th World Communications Day message (2010)

Social media, in particular, is the fastest growing form of communication in the United States. Our use of social media should be conducted in a manner that is safe and responsible.

Personnel are required to act as reasonably prudent persons when using technology and social media, meaning, he or she acts in moderation, follows community ethics, and exercises due care.

As Pope Benedict XVI noted in his message for the 44th World Communications Day (2010), this form of media “can offer priests and all pastoral workers a wealth of information and content that was difficult to access before, and facilitate forms of collaboration and greater communion in ways that were unthinkable in the past.”

The Church can use social media to encourage respectful dialogue and honest relationships. To do so requires us to approach social media as means of evangelization and to consider the Church’s role in providing a Christian perspective on social media literacy.

Those who minister and work for the Church understand that we interface with people as part of that ministry and work. It is the responsibility of the entire Church to reach out to the faithful and facilitate an authentic journey of following the Gospel and respond to the challenge of discipleship.

Yet, as we fully enter into this new millennium, the manner in which we interface with people is changing. Technological tools are already used in positive and dynamic ways in many Church settings. “Using the media correctly and competently can lead to a genuine inculturation of the Gospel.” (*The Church in America [Ecclesia in America]*, no. 72)

Section Two – Basic Terms

- **Personnel:** all employees and volunteers of the Diocese of Rockford and its parishes and schools, its institutions and entities.
- **Ministry/Group:** Any parish, school, and Diocesan institution and entity and its employees/volunteers which administers/sponsors an interactive online presence.

Examples: A parish Facebook page; a high school football web page; a youth ministry blog; a parish website; an event-based activity sponsored by/with the Diocese of Rockford which is published in some manner on the internet.

- **Minors:** Any person under the age of 18.
- **Vulnerable Adult:** A dependant adult; one who lacks the legal capacity of an adult.
- **Mandated Reporter:** One who may work with children in the course of his or her work duties or volunteer duties. The definition of a mandated reporter contained in the Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act is adopted herein. Examples include: administrators, certified staff, non-certified staff, superintendent, teacher, principal, school counselor, school nurse, school social worker, assistant principal, teacher's aide, truant officer, school psychologist, and school secretary, parish secretary, maintenance worker, cafeteria worker, before-school or after-school caretaker, coach, mental health personnel, social workers, psychologists, domestic violence personnel, substance abuse treatment personnel, parish volunteers, parish employees, youth minister, includes all staff at overnight, day care volunteers and employees, pre-school or nursery school facilities, recreational program personnel, foster parents, paid and volunteer religious education teachers, member of the clergy

Section Three – Guiding Principles

The Web is no longer simply a repository of information—it has become a participatory platform for content creation and distribution.

Advances in technology have increased the opportunities for the church to communicate her message. For us in the Church, technology and social media can be considered tools for communication, catechesis and evangelization. Technology and social media however, should not be the only tools. They should not become an expedient and convenient means to evade the complicated and integrated work of building human relationships, which usually calls for in-person contact. Technology and social media at times fall short in truly enhancing the connectedness of human-to-human, face-to-face social interaction.

The key question that faces our church personnel when deciding to engage technology and social media is- *how will we engage?* Careful consideration should be used in determining the particular strengths of each form of media (blogs, social networks, text messaging, etc.) and the needs of a parish, school, and Diocesan institution or entity. The strengths should match the needs. Simply establishing a web presence is not enough. The parish, school, or Diocesan institution or entity should set expectations regarding how often content is updated/posted and what content is updated/posted. For instance, a blog post may not be the most effective way to remind the parish faithful of the annual picnic. However, a mass text message to athletes and their parents reminding them that volleyball practice begins at 9 a.m. may be very effective.

Boundaries

Personnel in the Church should be ever vigilant regarding healthy boundaries with everyone, especially with minors and vulnerable adults. Minors and vulnerable adults are not the peers of an adult serving within a leadership capacity.

It is inappropriate for personnel to include minors and vulnerable adults within their own social circle, on-line or otherwise. Church personnel should not be accessible on a constant or on-call or social basis to the minors and vulnerable adults they serve. Personnel are duty-bound to set the boundary.

Be selective – a variety of digital media is available. Use the right medium for your message – a blog or social network might not be the right place for messages intended only for a small group, and email or other means might be best.

Be responsible –members of individual Diocesan churches and/or other entities are personally responsible for their posted content, and will be held personally accountable for such. Official statements of parish or Diocesan policies may only be made by the Pastor/Administrator.

Be smart – a blog or community post in a forum is visible to the entire world. Remember that what you write will be public and permanent. Be respectful of your Catholic community.

Identify yourself – authenticity and transparency are driving forces behind social media. Use real identities rather than anonymous or fictitious-names, identities, posts and comments.

Respect the privacy of others – do not publish the personal information of others in the community without their permission or, in the case of minors and vulnerable adults, without the permission of their parents.

Be respectful –respect your audience, express your views with appropriate language, civility, and be respectful of the Church and her teachings. Your communications must not offend the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Do not tell secrets – respect the confidentiality of matters that are shared with you in confidence, or that are meant to be kept confidential by the nature of your work, ministry or volunteer mission. Be mindful, however, of your charge as a mandated reporter and that confidentiality cannot apply in situations that require you to report under the mandated reporter law.

Primacy of Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their children in faith and the first heralds of the faith. Personnel must recognize the importance of the role of parents and guardians when personnel use technological forms of communication with minors and vulnerable adults. As a Church, we seek a partnership with parents/guardians in the faith formation of their children. Be aware that many young people utilize technology, socially or otherwise, with and without the permission of their parents/guardian. Personnel are to receive permission from the parents/guardians of each minor and vulnerable adult with whom personnel wish to communicate through social media and technology and shall respect their authority. Personnel may provide them with information regarding safe use of technology and social media for their children.

Discretion

We must take great care to be consistent in representing the worth of our character on-line. Clear communication and respect for boundaries is required at any level of contact--especially with minors and vulnerable adults.

E-mails, text messages, blog postings or comments, and videos are all public forums of which a permanent record can be obtained. We must not fear this reality, but rather be educated on the public nature of such communication. As a representative of the Church, those who work with the Church faithful should be diligent in avoiding situations which might be the source of scandal for themselves, others, or the Church.

Ownership

Any technological tools that we use as part of our work or volunteering in the Diocese of Rockford, such as websites, blogs, social network sites, and the like, are the property of the Diocese of Rockford.

1. Use of Official Name and Logo. Any use of the logo of the Diocese of Rockford and its entities for branding or titling pages, blogs, or other similar elements of social media must be approved in writing by the Diocese of Rockford prior to use. Requests for consent to use such names or logos are to be made to the Communications Director (in the case of the Diocese, its institutions or entities, and its or their Administration) the pastor (in the case of the parish and its ministries or administration) and the Principal (in the case of the school). Any uses in existence at the time of adoption of this Code are not grandfathered and should be authorized. Permission to use the name or logo of the Diocese, parish, school, Diocesan institution or entity may be revoked at any time in the sole discretion of the Diocese, parish, school, Diocesan institution or entity.

2. Interpretation. In areas where this Code does not provide a direct answer for how members of our Church faithful should conduct themselves personnel should contact their supervisor. Questions on interpretation of this Code may be sent to the Director of Communications for the Diocese of Rockford.

3. Duties of Moderators. Each parish, school, Diocesan institution or entity that has a social media vehicle must have two adult moderators. Moderators of parish, school, institution or entity social media are responsible for ensuring compliance with this and all Diocesan policies and codes of conduct. All comment and blog response areas must be moderated. Those responsible for such areas must review and approve comments prior to posting, and should not post any comment which is not civil, misrepresents the position of the Church, offends the faith or morals of the Church, or includes inappropriate language or speech. Anonymous comments should not be permitted. All moderator functions should reserve the right to ban offenders. Moderators who permit users to post materials such as documents, photographs or video should make clear to users that the site will not archive those materials and should delete them after a published period of time (typically 3 months).

4. Individual Judgment. Even when engaging in social media for personal use, the comments of personnel may be viewed as a reflection on that community and the Catholic Church universal. Personnel should use prudent and reasonable judgment when engaging in social media activities and should be on guard against actions and discussions that could harm the interests of themselves, the community, or the Church.

5. Copyright Laws. Personnel must comply fully with copyright law when using social media and technology

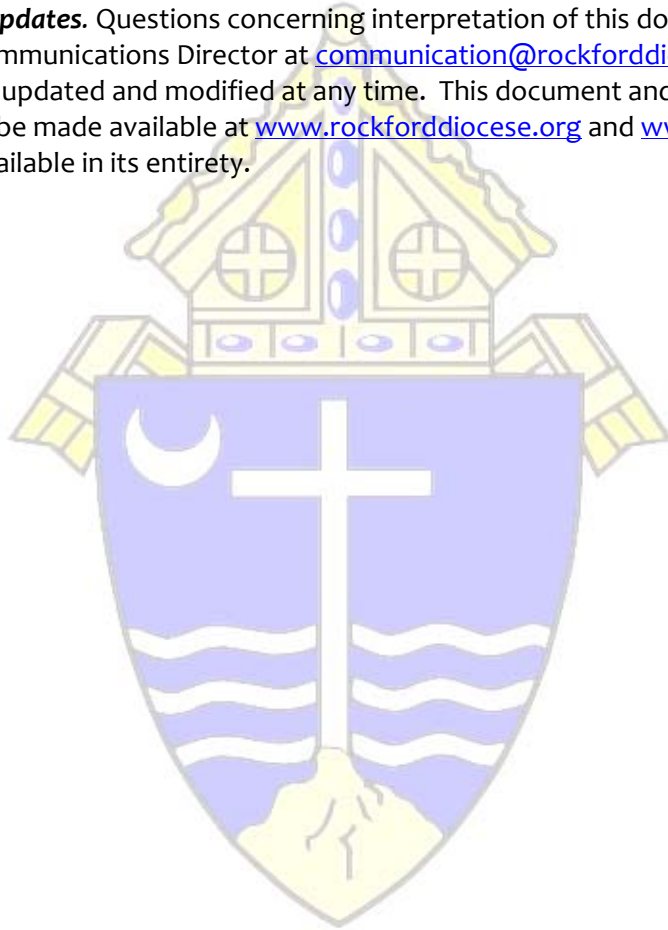
6. Privacy. Personnel are to safeguard the privacy interests of others. In particular, personally identifiable information (that is, name, phone number, address or email address), should not be disclosed without the prior consent of the person identified. In cases where an individual has consented to the publication of such information, appropriate privacy settings

should be utilized. Personnel using social media are required to abide by the confidentiality policies of the Diocese of Rockford.

7. Additional Guidelines. Pastors and Administrators of parishes, schools, Diocesan institutions or entities may implement more restrictive rules for the use of social media and technology if they deem it appropriate.

8. Abuses. Any use of social media that violates this Code or any other Diocesan policy should be brought to the attention of the Pastor/Administrator or the Diocesan Communications Director immediately.

9. Questions and Updates. Questions concerning interpretation of this document should be directed to the Communications Director at communication@rockforddiocese.org. This document may be updated and modified at any time. This document and any future modifications will be made available at www.rockforddiocese.org and www.ceorockford.org where it will be available in its entirety.



Section Four – Social Networking/Web Pages/Forums

Social networking has revolutionized the way people communicate and share information with one another. Therefore, it can also be a way to connect and interact with people in the Church and communicate the Church's catechizing and evangelizing activities with the faithful. A variety of social networking tools are being used by millions of people daily.

A social networking site or web page is an extension of the ministry or group; that is, the web presence of the parish, school, or Diocesan institution or entity by which it is sponsored, administered and monitored. A parish, school, diocesan institution or entity which establishes a web presence must make a commitment to this vehicle of communication. Web pages, especially the index, main page(s) and calendar of events, should be regularly updated. There should be an intentional plan and set of goals regarding establishing, maintaining and updating a web presence. This plan should be clearly communicated to the staff, employees and volunteers of the parish, school, diocesan institution or entity.

A social network service utilizes software to build online social networks for communities of people who share interests and activities. Most services are primarily web-based and provide various ways for users to interact, such as chat, messaging, email, video or voice chat, file sharing, blogging, and discussion groups.

- **Social network:** A social network is a Web 2.0 site that is entirely driven by content of its members. Individuals are allowed flexibility in privacy settings; in posting text, photos, video, links, and other information; and in level of interaction with other members.
 - * Examples: Facebook, LinkedIn,, Twitter, You Tube, and Flickr.
- **Micro-blog:** This form of multimedia blogging allows users to send brief text updates or to publish micromedia such as photos or audio clips, to be viewed by anyone or by a restricted group, which can be chosen by the user. These messages can be submitted by a variety of means, including text messaging, instant messaging, e-mail, digital audio, or through a Web interface. The content of a micro-blog differs from a traditional blog in that it is typically smaller in actual size and aggregate file size.
 - * Example: Twitter is a form of micro-blogging.

Best Practices

Websites and social networking profile pages are the centerpiece of any social media activity. The following are best practices for establishing a site. These can apply to a web page, profile, fan page or a particular church event on a social networking site such as Facebook, a blog, a Twitter account, sports team page, parish page, etc.

- The decision of whether to have a web presence is that of the Pastor/Administrator of the parish, school, diocesan institution or entity.
- The ministry/group must have approval from the Pastor/administrator for the actual ministry/group page: i.e., for that choice of vehicle, the layout and design, and content of the page.

- The ownership of the web page or other social media tool belongs to the parish, school, diocesan institution or entity, and not to the ministry or group. The Pastor/Administrator has the sole discretion to modify or close the web presence.
- The Pastor/Administrator uses the pastor's/administrator's personal credit card or the credit card of the parish, school, or diocesan institution or entity in establishing the web presence, and the Pastor/Administrator is to receive the password. Only the Pastor/Administrator is to know both the password and the credit card number.
- For those parishes, schools, diocesan institutions or entities which already have a web presence at the time of the creation of this Code, all passwords and credit card numbers necessary to establish ownership and control of the web presence are required to be shared with the Pastor/Administrator promptly.
- There should be at least two adult site administrators (preferably more) for each site, to allow rapid response, continuous monitoring, and updating of the site.
- Forums or any other feedback medium must be continually monitored by the site administrators.
- Personal communication by church personnel is a reflection on the Church. Practice what you preach. Identify yourself. Do not use pseudonyms.
- Write in first person. Do not claim to represent the official position of the parish, school, diocesan institution or entity or the teachings of the Church, unless authorized to do so.
- Abide by copyright, fair use and IRS financial disclosure regulations.
- Do not divulge confidential information. Nothing posted on the Internet is private.
- Do not cite others, post photos or videos of them, or link to their material, etc., without their permission. Do not cite others, post photos or videos, or provide a link to any material that is inappropriate or offends the faith and morals and/or teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Practice Christian charity.
- Parents/guardians must give permission before posting photos or videos of minors or vulnerable adults.
- Do not post or otherwise use a picture or video that might be considered embarrassing or unflattering. If an individual is uncomfortable with a particular photo or video, it should be immediately removed from the website.
- Personnel who want to use social networking sites for work purposes must create a professional social networking account that is separate from their personal account and is identified as such. This account should be seen as an official extension of the Church organization's web presence and administrated by two adults.
- Personnel with permission from the Pastor/Administrator may create a social networking site on which both youth and adult employees/volunteers can join and interact without full access to one another's profiles.
- Personnel should set and communicate the time that is acceptable to send or receive an email or text message for work purposes. If you are accessing your ministry/group site late in the evening hours that has messaging capabilities, privacy setting should be "offline" or "unavailable."
- Some social networking sites have the capabilities of email, IM, group pages, blogging, display of videos and photos, forums, etc. Therefore, the same guidelines apply in regards to boundaries, content, and accessibility as stated in section three.

Parish, school, Diocesan institution, or entity web page(s) that support a ministry/group may publish information such as the following:

- History, mission and vision of the supported ministry/group.
- Contact information of the ministry/group and administrator(s).
- Information for upcoming activities, permission forms, and updates.
- Handbooks and policies.
- Additional links, references, and user resources related to the ministry/group.
- Photos and videos of people and events associated with the ministry/group.
- A “Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQ’s) section about the ministry/group.
- Schedules, calendars and cancellations of events.
- Forums
- Descriptions including audio/video of projects/events, including procedures, expectations, and suggested involvement.
- Achievements of the people associated with the ministry/group.

Social Networking with Minors and Vulnerable Adults

Parents of minors and vulnerable adults must have access to everything provided to their minor children/vulnerable adults. For example, parents are to be informed how social media are being used between the site and the minor or vulnerable adult, how to access the sites, and be copied on all material sent to their minor child/vulnerable adults, preferably via social networking vehicle used with the minor/vulnerable adult, although an alternative vehicle is permissible (that is, if a minor child receives a reminder via Twitter, personnel may send the parents a copy in a printed form or by an e-mail list).

- Parents are to be given access to everything provided to their minor child/vulnerable adult.
- Personnel must have permission from a minor’s or vulnerable adult’s parent or guardian before contacting the minor or vulnerable adult via social media or and before posting pictures, video, and other information that may identify that minor or vulnerable adult.
- There is a difference between initiating a “friend request” and accepting one. Minors and vulnerable adults must “friend request” the ministry/group site first. Parents are to be informed that a minor child or vulnerable adult is a friend of a ministry/group site.
- The ministry/group social networking site shall be registered under the applicable ministry/group/institution/entity.
- Personnel working in settings with minors and vulnerable adults, who have a “personal” social networking site, shall neither advertise that site nor “friend” a minor or vulnerable adult to his or her personal site.
- Personnel using social networking sites should avoid *My Space* due to its lack of user controls.
- Personnel’s mandated reporter obligation extends to all circumstances involving social networking and technology
- On-line Gaming: Personnel are prohibited from engaging in online games with minors and vulnerable adults.

Section Five – Email, Text Messaging and Video Chatting

Email and text messaging allow for increased flexibility and immediacy in communication. When combined appropriately with face-to-face communication, email and text messaging can significantly enhance how personnel communicate with the church faithful. The same boundary issues that must be respected in oral communication must be respected in written ones. Good judgment should always be used with text-based communication tools.

Remember that there is no such thing as a private e-mail or text message. All e-mails and texts can be logged, archived, and forwarded to other parties. Personal communication can quickly become a public matter. Unlike verbal communication, any form of written communication has permanence. There should be no expectation of privacy.

Best Practices

- Personnel wishing to communicate via e-mail or text messaging with a minor or vulnerable adult are not permitted to do so without the prior consent of the parent/guardian of the minor or vulnerable adult.
- Parents must be copied, if possible, on all emails and text messages.
- Maintain a separate e-mail or text messaging account for your professional communication. Only use this account when communicating with minors or vulnerable adults.
- Personnel must maintain professionalism and appropriate boundaries in all communication.
- Before sending an e-mail or text message, ask yourself if someone might “read something into it” that you did not intend. Be cautious when sending an e-mail or text message, especially either in haste and/or when emotions are involved.
- If you think an e-mail or text message might somehow be misunderstood, do not send it. If there is any potential for embarrassment or harm, do not send the email or text message.
- Always avoid any communication (written, audio or video) that might be construed as being inappropriate or having sexual or romantic overtones.
- Personnel should set and communicate the time that is acceptable to send or receive an email or text message for work purposes. If you are accessing your ministry/group site late in the evening hours that has messaging capabilities, privacy setting should be “offline” or “unavailable.”
- Do not reply to an inappropriate e-mail or text message from anyone, especially a minor or vulnerable adult. Make a copy of such inappropriate communication and notify your Pastor/Administrator.
- Video chatting is never appropriate with a minors or vulnerable adults and is prohibited.
- Group or mass texts, a text message tree, or the like, must be initiated by personnel only.
- Personnel are encouraged to save copies of messages whenever possible, especially those with a minor or vulnerable adult.

Section Six – Blogging

A blog (a contraction of the term “web log”) is a type of website, usually maintained by an individual, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics, audio or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. “Blog” can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog.

As with any professional communication, a blog shall not be used:

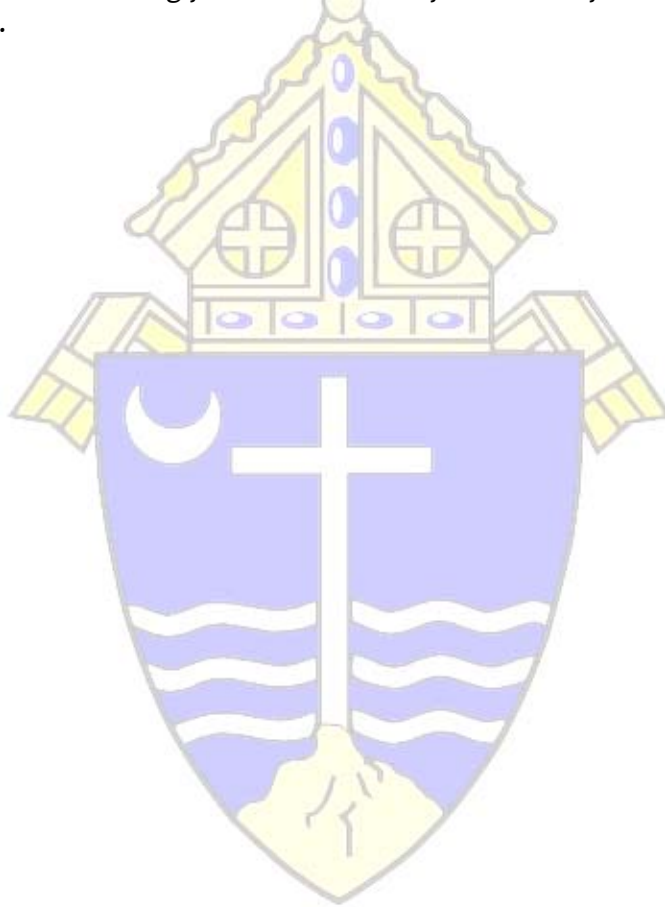
- For any personal communication or agenda;
- To conduct or promote outside business activities ;
- To derogate any individual, organization or institution;
- To divulge any personal information about any person or any confidential information about any one or any thing obtained in the course of one’s job duties.

Best Practices

- Any ministry/group blog that a ministry/group wishes to establish is required to be approved by the Pastor/Administrator prior to its establishment.
- Parents must have access to everything provided to their children/vulnerable adults.
- Personnel must have permission from a minor’s or vulnerable adult’s parent/guardian before contacting the minor or vulnerable adult via social media or before posting pictures, video, and other information that may identify that minor or vulnerable adult.
- If church personnel want to use a blog for work purposes they must create a professional blog that is separate from the personal blog. This account should be seen as an official extension of the institution’s web presence and administered by an adult.
- Personnel with permission from the Pastor/Administrator may create a blog on which both youth and adult employees/volunteers can interact without full access to one another’s profiles.
- While anyone we work with might blog late into evening hours, personnel should set and communicate the time that is acceptable to make or receive communication via blog for work purposes.
- Personnel’s mandated reporter obligation extends to all circumstances involving blogging, social networking and technology.

Section Seven – Personal Sites

Personal sites of church personnel should also reflect Catholic values, and should not offend the faith and morals and/or teachings of the Catholic Church. One's personal social networking, blog, websites, and other online activities and communications are public in nature, and personnel give up any expectation of privacy when they engage in online activity and communication. Individuals who work for or volunteer for the Catholic Church witness the Catholic faith through all of their entire web presence, communications, and activities. The Church maintains that its personnel are role models for the faithful, and especially for children and young people of the Church. The Church expects its employees and volunteers to conduct themselves accordingly both while on-duty and off-duty from their job or volunteer position.



Section Eight - 10 Guidelines for the Use of Technology and Social Media

1. All personnel representing the Diocese of Rockford must take great care to be reasonable and prudent in the use of social media and technology, and must adhere to Diocesan codes of conduct.
2. All usage of social media is public and permanent and thus requires discretion and prudence.
3. Distinct lines are to be drawn between professional relationships and personal relationships including as they relate to one's use of technology and social media.
4. Social networking must avoid inappropriate personal interaction.
5. Information of a confidential nature is not to be communicated via technology or social media.
6. Pictures, videos and all personal information are not to be shared or posted without prior consent of the individual and, in the case of a minor or vulnerable adult, consent of the parent of the minor or vulnerable adult.
7. Views expressed through technology and social media should always be made in a respectful manner with civility and Christian charity.
8. Be selective and cautious about visiting and participating in online sites, forums and groups.
9. Be aware that posted words, comments, images and videos can be easily misinterpreted.
10. Prior to administering an online presence on behalf of a diocesan parish/school/institution/entity, personnel must have the approval of the pastor and/or supervisor.

Section Nine – Appendix

- Diocese of Rockford Computer Use Policy located in the Diocese Employee Handbook; its Internet Access Policy and Authorization for Internet Access located in the Administrative Handbook of the Catholic Education Office of the Diocese of Rockford; the Catholic Charities Internet Access and Electronic Communications Policy; Catholic Charities Computer Data Security Policy located in its Employee Handbook.
- Diocese of Rockford Code of Pastoral Conduct:
<http://www.ceorockford.org/CEO/Portals/0/Parish%20Youth%20Ministry/Code%20of%20Pastoral%20Conduct.pdf>
- NETSMARTZ411:
Parents' and guardians' online resource for answering questions about Internet Safety, computers, and the Web.
www.netsmartz411.org
- NCMEC: National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
Charles B. Wang International Children's Building
699 Prince Street
Alexandria VA 22314-3175
1-800-843-5678
www.missingkids.com
The Nation's Resource Center for Child Protection
The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's® (NCMEC) mission is to help prevent child abduction and sexual exploitation; help find missing children; and assist victims of child abduction and sexual exploitation, their families, and the professionals who serve them.
- CyberTipline:
The Congressionally mandated CyberTipline is a reporting mechanism for cases of child sexual exploitation including child pornography, online enticement of children for sex acts, molestation of children outside the family, sex tourism of children, child victims of prostitution, and unsolicited obscene material sent to a child. Reports may be made 24- hours per day, 7 days per week online at www.cybertipline.com or by calling 1-800-843- 5678.
- Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC)
The ICAC Task Force Program was created to help State and local law enforcement agencies enhance their investigative response to offenders who use the Internet, online communication systems, or other computer technology to sexually exploit children. The program is currently composed of 59 regional Task Force agencies and is funded by the United States Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.