



**DIOCESE OF SALT LAKE CITY  
OFFICE OF SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

**SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

*“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)*

For generations Church leaders, including Pope Francis, have articulated the clear need to use new technologies to express the Word of God to all. The Diocese of Salt Lake City recognizes the powerful tool electronic media can be to evangelize and educate people. In order to ensure electronic communication on the Internet is appropriate, effective and reflective of Catholic values, and is consistent with the rules and values of the workplace, the Diocese of Salt Lake City has established the following policies. These policies are in addition to and complement existing policies regarding the use of electronic communications.

1. **Definition of Social Media:** Any web-based and mobile technologies which are designed to turn communication into interactive dialogue. This includes, but is not limited to the use of blogs/wikis, message boards/forums, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.
2. **Establishing a Social Media Presence:** It is important to remember online content is visible to anyone in the world so one must always be mindful about the nature of the information posted. Content should consistently represent the views and teachings of the Catholic Church.
  - Approval from the department head/pastor/principal/agency director is needed before seeking permission to establish a new site or account from the Diocesan, parish, school or social service center webmaster.
  - A minimum of two adult individuals within the Diocesan department and/or parishes, schools or agencies, should have full administrative access to the account (no minors should be granted administrative privileges).
  - Personal pages and information should be neither advertised nor accessible to young people. In addition, do not link personal accounts to your work accounts.
  - **Post the following “rules of conduct” established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for visitors to Facebook sites: “All posts and comments should be marked by Christian charity and respect for truth. They should be on topic and presume the good will of other posters. Discussion should take place primarily from a faith perspective. No ads please.”**
3. **Guidelines for the Use of Social Networking Sites with Minors:** The Diocese of Salt Lake City recognizes the various ways, both positive and negative, that technology and social media can be used. It is important that technology be used in a responsible and ethical way and that diocesan staff, volunteers and parents be transparent in all forms of communication, particularly when ministering to young persons. Social networking sites should be used for

ministry and education rather than for befriending. (See Diocesan Safe Environment Policy, Appendix. C.)

- Written permission must be obtained prior to posting identifying information of minors/young people on websites. See: [Publications/Websites/Social Media Authorization Release Form](#).
- The site administrator is an adult considered to be working with minors and thus should have completed all safe environment requirements per the Diocesan policy.
- Parents should be informed that a social networking site is being utilized as a standard part of ministry and any materials posted on the site must also be available through other communication mediums.
- In photographs of youth activities, youth should not be “tagged,” or identified by name in the photograph. On the original social networking site, it is recommended that the “no tagging” option be set.
- Because of the potential of teen crises or time relevant information, any pages with high volumes of youth involvement should be monitored frequently by official organizational personnel. A plea for help that goes unanswered can be dangerous for teens and their families as well as damaging to the parish, school, and/or organization.
- It is recommended that clear guidelines or parameters be established with regard to times of communication between adults and young people. **While young people may be on the phone/texting in the late evening hours, those who minister with young people should pre-determine a timeframe when it is too late to take a professional call, except in the case of serious urgency.**
- If youth are to engage in blogging as a part of an officially sanctioned organizational activity, such activity must be monitored by at least two adults; the content of such a blog must be in compliance with Catholic Church teaching and values.

#### General “Rules of the Road” for the Administrator

- **Stick to ministry** and do not claim to represent the official position of the Church unless authorized to do so. **Be honest, professional and clear** as to who you are and the ministry you represent.
- Do not post information about the Diocese, coworkers, or the audience that should be kept confidential.
- All comments should be respectful and on topic. Block/delete those that are potentially libelous, disrespectful or contrary to church teaching.
- Prior to posting make sure you are following all copyright and fair use laws are observed.
- Always attribute photos, quotes, information to original source/author.
- Parents must have access to everything provided to their children. For example, parents should be made aware of how social media are being used, be told how to access the sites, and be given the opportunity to be copied on all material sent to their children via social networking (including text messages). While parents should be provided with the same material as their children, it does not have to be via the same technology (that is, if children receive a reminder via Twitter, parents can receive it in a printed form or via e- mail).
- **Make everyone aware of the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act, which is federal legislation that oversees how websites interact with children under age 13.**



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**PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES**

The Diocese of Salt Lake City respects the right of clergy, employees, volunteers and independent contractors to create and maintain personal social networking websites. Priests, Deacons, Employees, Volunteers and Independent Contractors who choose to identify their affiliations with the Diocese of Salt Lake City and/or its entities (parishes, schools and agencies) on personal social networking websites seen by their readers as representatives of the Diocese of Salt Lake City, must adhere to the following guidelines:

1. **Include a Disclaimer.** Add a notice to personal websites that clearly communicates to readers that the comments or views you choose to share do not reflect the views of the Diocese of Salt Lake City, parish, school or other diocesan-related entity. For example: “The views expressed on this social network are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer.”
2. **Adhere to the Confidentiality Policy.** Employees, Volunteers and Independent Contractors must maintain the confidentiality of the Diocese of Salt Lake City and its entities at all times.
3. Policies regarding workplace conduct in our churches, offices and schools also apply to online activities. Inappropriate postings that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment or threats of violence will not be tolerated.
4. Be mindful that the information posted on your personal social networking site, or on other social networking sites could potentially be grounds for discipline or possible termination of employment.

**Do's:**

- Comply with all safe environment requirements per the Diocese of Salt Lake City policy.
- Obtain written permission prior to posting identifying information of minors/young people on websites.
- Inform parents that a social networking site is being utilized as a standard part of youth ministry.
- Monitor sites frequently.

**Don'ts:**

- Initiate friend/connection requests.
- Tag youth in photographs.
- Post personal content on ministry based sites of the Diocese of Salt Lake City.

**Additional resources:**

1. Vogt, Brandon. *The Church and New Media: Blogging Converts, Online Activists, and Bishops Who Tweet*. Huntingdon, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc, 2011.
2. USCCB Social Media Guidelines: [www.usccb.org/about/communications/social-media-guidelines.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/about/communications/social-media-guidelines.cfm)
3. Recommended Technology Guidelines for Pastoral Work with Young People: <http://www.nfcym.org/resources/documents/TechnologyGuidelinesNov2010.pdf>



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**PUBLICATIONS /WEBSITES / SOCIAL MEDIA**  
**AUTHORIZATION RELEASE**

**This authorization release form shall serve as parental/legal guardian permission for the use of first name and last name initial (name), likeness and/or photographic image of a child/youth where such permission is required.** I hereby give my express and unqualified approval for my child's/youth's name, likeness and/or photographic image (still or video) to appear in Parish, School or Organization publications and/or websites/social media sites. No consideration, monetary or otherwise, shall be paid.

Parents/guardians, relatives, etc., should be made aware of best practices regarding photos taken on field trips, class parties, plays, activities, etc. Restraint should be exercised in posting photos on personal and social media websites that include children or youth other than their own. Discretion should be used to honor the wishes of parents who do not want photos of their children/youth posted on websites or social media sites. *Please see Social Media Policy.* If your child or youth are in a public place that allows photography, that child or youth are subject to having their photo taken. The person taking the photo cannot use it for "advertising" or intending to show that the person photographed endorses a product.

I grant permission to: \_\_\_\_\_ for the use of my  
*(Parish, School, Organization)*

child's/youth's name, likeness and/or photographic image to appear in Parish, School or Organization publications and/or websites/social media sites.

I understand that if, for whatever reason, at any point in time, I decide to revoke this agreement and I so notify the Parish, School or Organization in writing, all references to my child's/youth's name, likeness and/or photographic image will no longer be used. I understand that website/social media references and website/social media photographic images will be removed within thirty (30) days of the written notification. I understand that the Parish, School or Organization is not responsible for access to the information or downloads made by users using websites or social media sites prior to this removal of references (i.e., name, likeness and/or photographic image). I further understand that my child's/youth's name, likeness and/or photographic image may continue to be used in any publication already printed or published prior to my revocation of the consent provided herein.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Name of Child (Please Print)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date of Birth*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

☐ I do not grant permission for the use of my child's/youth's name, likeness and/or photographic image to appear in Parish, School or Organization publications and/or websites/social media sites.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*