

Understanding Social Networking and Digital Communication

As a youth worker for the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese (hereafter referred to as the Diocese), you accept a great responsibility for nurturing the lives of young people, extending far beyond your interaction with them at a Direct Diocesan Camp, Program or Event (hereafter referred to as event). Young people will look to you as an example of Christian living, and may model many of their decisions based on what they see (or perceive) you doing, both on or offline. A youth worker will forever be recognized by young people, parents, clergy, and fellow staff members as a representative of the Church. For this reason, you should carefully consider the content and nature of any type of communication with a young person.

For the purpose of this Social Networking and Digital Communication Policy, content is defined as photos, videos, messages, posts, or any other information shared through social networking sites. In addition, this policy applies to any and all forms of digital communication, including but not limited to email, instant messages, texts, MMS, video chat, etc. One must also consider that any digital communication or content posted online, without its proper and original context, could be misconstrued, ultimately damaging the participants of this event and the Diocese.

For your own protection and the protection of young people, youth workers are strongly discouraged from any form of digital communication with a minor, including being “friends” on a social networking site. In order to facilitate continued mentoring and dialogue online, it is recommended that event administration create “official” social networking groups or fan pages. This allows for healthy communication with young people in an open forum, rather than private communication with a young person.

The Diocese requires that staff observe the following policies:

Social Networking and Digital Communication Policy

Friends and Connections

Youth workers are prohibited from initially contacting or requesting “friends” under the age of 18. Because you are in a position of authority as a youth worker, a young person may feel obligated to “accept” your friend request.

If a young person requests your “friendship” on a social networking site, or if you are already “friends” with minors, you are strongly encouraged to set stringent privacy settings in order to maintain appropriate boundaries.

Appropriate Content and Behavior

Any interactions with a young person through digital communication should be appropriate and professional and serve as a reflection of these policies.

Any inappropriate content on your profile/site or “tagged” to your profile/site must be removed. This applies to anything and everything on your profile/site, including both event and non-event content, i.e. personal photos, event orientation or break, etc. If another individual posts inappropriate content on your profile/site, you should immediately remove it and notify them to refrain from posting

inappropriate content in the future. You should monitor your own profile/site regularly to make sure that you are reasonably aware, at all times, of its content.

Youth workers must not use blogs, personal pages or websites to disparage the event, its staff, employees, other individuals, or the Diocese.

Youth workers must not use social networking sites to share content prohibited by the event or Diocesan policies, and not consistent with an Orthodox Christian lifestyle. This includes the abuse of alcohol and drugs, sexual behavior, sexual harassment, bullying, or use of obscenities, profanity, or vulgar language.

Reporting Procedure

If you receive any inappropriate digital communication or content from a young person, you must immediately notify your direct supervisor, i.e. Event Director, Diocesan Youth Director, Diocesan Chancellor, etc.

If a young person reveals abuse or inappropriate interactions of any kind with an adult, you must immediately notify your direct supervisor, i.e. Event Director, Diocesan Youth Director, Diocesan Chancellor, etc.

If you have additional questions about reporting procedures, please refer to the “Reporting” section of the Policies and Procedures for Event Staff.

Any youth worker found to be in violation of any portion of this policy will be subject to immediate disciplinary action, and may include the youth worker’s immediate dismissal from the staff and exclusion from future programs, events and activities at the discretion of your direct supervisor, i.e. Event Director, Diocesan Youth Director, Diocesan Chancellor, etc.

Signature Date

Signature of Minor’s Parent or Guardian Date