

Archdiocese of Milwaukee

Safeguarding All of God's Family



- **Social Networking Policy**
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Social Networking Policy

Social networking sites are online Web sites created so that individuals who share a commonality can communicate their interests. These sites have the ability to enhance communication between individuals as well as groups. In its most basic sense, social networking sites are a way for people to share news, information, opinions and insights by facilitating interactions using online technologies.

If used discreetly and responsibly, these forms of communication can be beneficial in ministry and education. However, just as there are boundaries when engaged in face-to-face communication, there are also boundaries when using the Internet as your source of communication. When using these technologies, every effort must be made and adhered to in order to create and maintain safe and secure environments; serious repercussions may result if behaviors are careless. Therefore, individuals must keep the following guidelines in mind when considering the use of social networking sites, especially for programs that involve youth under the age of 18.

GENERAL RULES OF VISIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Sites must first and foremost representative of the values of our Catholic faith and reflect the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- A clear statement of intended purpose and outcome of the social networking site should be made available.
- All appropriate individuals at the parish and/or school (pastors, principals, and staff) must be aware of and have given approval for using a social networking site for parish and/or school programs.
- When a minor has access to an adult's network of personal friends, the dynamic between minor/adult can be compromised. Therefore, any parish/school/ministry site must be completely separate from personal sites.
- The site should maintain transparency in all communications and postings.
 - The administrator of the site must be an adult.
 - The administrator of the site must regularly monitor all comments and postings. Any inappropriate content should be deleted immediately and it should be made known to the individual who posted it that inappropriate content is not tolerated.
 - All involved should know that what is posted isn't private or temporary.
- The main purpose of the site should be for general communication, not chatting or socializing.

- A professional image should be projected, not only to minors, but also the general public. Keep in mind that humor and sarcasm can be easily misinterpreted and a statement or joke may seem harmless, but may be offensive to someone else.
- Mandatory reporting guidelines apply to all social networking sites.
 - If any information raises suspicion that a minor has been abused/neglected/exploited staff and volunteers are obligated to report to local law enforcement officials or child protective service agencies.
 - The information must be communicated to the proper authorities, documented and then removed from the site.

ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES WITH YOUTH

- Parents must be made aware, in writing, of the parish and/or school intended use of a social networking site. Parents must be invited to have access to the site.
- Never be aggressive. There is a difference between initiating a “friend request” and accepting one. You should allow minors to request you as a “friend,” do not seek them out.
- Set times you will be available on a social networking site. Minors should know that you are not available 24/7.
- All communication and interaction should always reflect your role as the adult.
- Do not communicate with a minor more than necessary on social networking sites.
- Social networking sites should be seen only as a means of communication, not a personal expression.
- Never say or do anything that wouldn’t be said or be done in the classroom or in public.
 - Maintaining professional relationships with students on a social networking site avoids any bias in the classroom.
- Follow all policies and procedures for posting pictures.
 - Tagging pictures with names of minors or other identifiers is not permitted. This precaution will prevent them from showing up on search engines.

Practices and Guidelines for Use of Social Media

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee recognizes that in today's environment the use of the Internet, social networking and digital communication are important and wishes to take advantage of these ways of communication as a means to enhance our ministry and educational needs.

In June 2010, Archbishop Jerome E. ListECKi issued the Social Networking Policy for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. The following information outlines practices and guidelines to be used with the Social Networking Policy in order to maintain healthy boundaries and safe environments in a virtual world.

Social Networking in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee

Visibility and Accountability

It must be understood that, at all times, activities on behalf of the Church in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee on a social networking site must mirror God's love and the teachings of the Church.

Using the Internet on behalf of the Church or in the Church's name should be seen as an educational and evangelizing tool to invite the people of God into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ through the promotion of school and ministerial programs.

Online or offline there must always be respect for human dignity.

Transparency and Boundaries

Transparency means anything the administrator of a social networking site posts or communicates is visible to anyone who has access to that site. It must remain true and verifiable. All interactions on the Internet need to remain transparent. To ensure transparency, the administrator of a site must not use a pseudonym; real names must be used.

Social media is a powerful tool for communication. However, these tools must not be used for: 1) selling of goods or services 2) defaming the character of any individual or institution 3) divulging any personal information about children that would jeopardize their safety or well-being in any way 4) personal attacks of any kind.

Audiences can be students, parents, co-workers, supervisors, just to name a few. Posts should only be what a person would want the world to see. Once something is posted on a social networking site, it becomes available to all. Once something becomes a part of the World Wide Web, it is impossible to remove it from the Internet completely.

Exercise caution with regard to exaggeration, colorful language, copyrighted materials and derogatory remarks or characterizations.

Establishing a Social Networking Site

Every parish/school should be aware of and abide by the Acceptable Use Policy of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

All appropriate individuals at the parish and/or school (e.g., pastor, principal) must be aware of, and give approval for using a social networking site for parish and/or school programs.

The adult supervisor of the site should always remain in control of the conversations and comments.

Pay close attention to the site's security and allow only those who are approved participants access to the site.

Making parents or guardians aware of a parish's and/or school's anticipated use of a social networking site can take the form of a written letter or an email stating the intended purpose of the site as well as how the parent or guardian can access the site.

“Friending” on Social Networking Sites

In a virtual world, a “friend” can mean anyone with whom you are willing to communicate through that particular medium. People you classify as “friends” have the capability of downloading, copying and sharing your information with others.

Adults who wish to use a social networking Web site in order to connect with the youth to whom they minister are strongly encouraged to use a closed group account that youth may join. Youth may then be invited to join a group rather than requesting to “friend” an adult on his/her personal account. The purpose of the separate accounts/profiles is to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries with youth.

A minor should always be the one who is requesting to be a “friend” on a social networking site. Due to the disparity of power between youth and adults, a minor may not feel he/she has the ability to decline requests from adults.

Individual personal profiles on social networking sites should not be used for ministry or work related projects. Any adult using a social networking site ministering to children or youth should set very strict privacy settings.

There are risks with social networking, especially with blurring boundaries of personal and professional relationships.

Know your friends/fans/followers before you accept them on your social network site.

When using social media you should weigh whether an email or post will put your effectiveness as a role model at risk.

Be aware of the Children's Online Privacy Act. This is federal legislation that oversees how Websites interact with children under the age of 13. You can find out more at <http://www.ftc.gov/privacyinitiatives/childrens.html>.

Mandatory Reporting Responsibilities and Inappropriate Content

Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse/neglect/exploitation or youth apply in the virtual world as much as they do in the physical.

Mandatory reporting laws apply not only if there is an occurrence between an adult and a minor but also applies when there is unlawful or suspicious behavior between two or more minors (e.g., harassment, cyberbullying, sending and/or receiving pornographic images).

If an action or behavior occurs off-campus or off-site, and it is the opinion that it has done or has the potential to do harm or adversely affect or jeopardize the safety of others, action must be taken.

Any inappropriate material raising suspicion that a minor is being abused/neglected/exploited should immediately be reported to the proper authorities. The material on the site should be documented and then removed after consultation with Child Protective Services or the local civil authorities.

Inappropriate material or content that details inappropriate behavior should be addressed and removed from the site.

Use of Pictures

Do not post personal identifiable information or pictures of minors **without verifiable consent** from their parents or guardians. This includes full names, home addresses, email addresses, telephone numbers or any information that would allow someone to identify or contact a minor.

Pictures should only be posted with parent/guardian permission. Pictures of minors should only be posted in groups of five (5) or more. Minor should not be identified by name; only by group (e.g., soccer team, 4th grade class).

Do not "tag" a picture with a minor's information. Tagging is defined as a keyword or term added to a photo, video or blog post to help users find related topics or media either through browsing on the site or as a term to make your entry more relevant to search engines.

Glossary of Social Media Terms

Above the fold: It refers to the section of a web page that is visible to a visitor without the need to scroll down.

Access: It is the ability to see what you are trying to view (e.g. you can see a friend's photo, but not his/her profile).

Blog: Blog is a word that was created from two words: "web log." Blogs are usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics 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*.

Chat: Can refer to any communication on the Internet. It can be one-on-one communication through a text-based application commonly referred to as instant messaging or and interaction on a Web site, with a number of people adding text items one after the other into the same space at (almost) the same time.

Comments: A comment is a response that is often provided as an answer or reaction to a blog post or message on a social network. Comments are a primary form of two-way communication on the social web.

Communities (online communities): They are groups of people communicating mainly through the Internet. They may simply have a shared interest to talk about or more formally learn from each other and find solutions. Online communities may use email lists or forums, where content is centralized. Communities may also emerge from conversations around or between blogs.

Content: It is used to describe text, pictures, video and any other meaningful material that is on the Internet.

Cyberspace: The term has been widely used as a general term for the Internet or World Wide Web.

Domain Name: It is the identifying name of an internet site. This is what Internet users type into the address bar in order to locate a specific site online. The domain name for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee is www.archmil.org. The first part, **www** identifies the server name of the domain. **Archmil**, the second part, states the unique name of the organization, company or individual; and the last part is the domain name extension which identifies the purpose of the Web site. In this case **org** represents a non-profit organization.

Domain Name Extensions: They indicate the purpose for which a Web site exists. Here are the most frequently registered extensions and their common usage, although it must be noted that any extension can be used for any purpose:

- .biz** - Business
- .bz** - Brazil (commonly used when .biz is unavailable)
- .cc** - Commonly used when .com is unavailable
- .com** - Commercial, for-profit businesses (commonly used for everything)
- .edu** - 4-year, degree-granting colleges/universities (schools, libraries, and museums should register under country domain names)
- .gov** - United States federal government agencies (state and local governments register under country domain names)
- .info** - Information
- .name** - Personal Web sites
- .net** - Internet administrative sites (commonly used for other things)
- .org** - Non-profit organizations (commonly used for other things)
- .us .wi.us** - Used by state, and counties, or cities in Wisconsin

Embedding: Is the act of adding code to a Web site so that a video or a photo can be displayed while it's being hosted at another site. Many users now watch embedded YouTube videos or Flickr photos on blogs rather than on the original site. This can also be used to cross-promote and drive users to different sites.

Event Blog: It is a blog specifically launched as a companion to an event.

Facebook: See Social Networking Sites.

Flickr: See Social Networking Sites.

Forums: Also known as a message board, a forum is an online discussion site where people can post messages or comment on existing messages. It is the modern equivalent of a bulletin board.

Friend (noun): A person with whom you have a mutually-agreed connection.

Friend (verb): The act of adding a person to your social graph on a particular social network (e.g., asking someone to "friend me on Facebook").

Friend List: It is a user's personal sub-categorization of friends on a social network (e.g., current friends, old friends, co-workers, clients).

Groups: They are collections of individuals with some sense of online unity through their activities, interests or values.

Hits: It is a measurement used in Web analytics. A “hit” measures how popular your site is by tallying how many visitors it’s had.

Hyperlink: It is a navigational reference to another document or page on the World Wide Web; typically activated by clicking on a highlighted word or icon at a particular location on the screen.

Instant Messaging (IM): Instant messaging is a form of real-time, direct, text-based communication between two or more people.

Links: They are highlighted text or images that, when clicked, jump from one web page or item of content to another. Bloggers use links, when writing, to reference their own or other content. Linking is another way of sharing; it acknowledges the value of others’ contributions by linking to them.

Message Boards: They are online discussion sites which virtually house people looking to discuss particular issues. Individuals post messages on the forum or message boards hoping to gain more information or start a conversation.

MySpace: See Social Networking Sites.

Navigation: It is a Facebook term for a broader social grouping such as a city, large company or university.

Offline: It indicates someone is not connected to the Internet (or online).

Online: It indicates someone is connected to the Internet, and may read or produce content.

Online Community: It is a group of people using social media tools and sites on the Internet.

Poke: It is the smallest unit of communication on a social network (e.g., you have just been poked by John, so do you want to poke back (respond)?).

Profile: The online representation of an individual’s identity; the information one puts online to define him/herself.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): It is the process of arranging your Web site to give it the best chance of appearing near the top of search engine. It improves the volume or quality of traffic to a Web site, ensuring that your web pages are accessible to search engines and focused in ways that help improve the chances they will be found. Search engines are one of the primary ways that Internet users find Web sites.

Share: The act of sharing a piece of content with specific friends or “posting to profile” so that those friends interested in you will read it.

Social Media: This refers to any online technology that lets people publish, converse and share content online (e.g., blogs, podcasts, webinar, forum or video hosting site).

Social Network: It is an online environment where individuals can contact other individuals, share information, join groups, promote businesses, etc.

Social Networking: It is the act of socializing or networking in an online community.

Social Networking Sites: They are large sites that host multiple communities comprised of people with profiles who have similar interest. These sites offer a place where people engage with one another online and share content. Examples of these communities include the following:

Facebook: It is an online community for people to connect or re-connect with others. It enables people to share information, pictures and videos of themselves.

LinkedIn: It is a professional online community used to network with fellow professionals; an online resume sharing site.

MySpace: It is a site where people can meet others with similar interests and create online communities by sharing information, pictures and videos.

YouTube: It is an online site for uploading and discussing videos. YouTube videos can also be embedded onto other social media sites such as blogs or social networks.

Flickr: It is an online site for storing, sharing and commenting on photos.

Twitter: It is a micro-blogging community where posts and links are 140 characters or less. Users can follow each other’s messages. You can use the @username command to direct a message towards another Twitter user. Additional Twitter terminology includes the following words/phrases:

Tweet: It is a post/entry made on Twitter.

Hashtag: It is similar to regular tags. They are keywords associated and assigned to an item of content with a hashmark (#) attached to the front of the word. Hashtags make it easier to follow a topic of interest discussed on Twitter.

Twitter Search: It is a search engine that filters real-time tweets.

Tags: They are keywords or terms added to a photo, video or blog post to help users find related topics or media either through browsing on the site or as a term to make an entry more relevant to search engines.

Upload: It is to transfer a file or other content from an individual's computer to an Internet site.

URL: It stands for Uniform Resource Locator and is the technical term for a web address (e.g., <http://www.archmil.org> is a URL).

Wall: It is a shared discussion board specifically about an individual and displayed on the individual's profile.

Web 2.0: This refers to the second generation of the Web, which enables people with no specialized technical knowledge to create their own Web sites in order to self-publish, create and upload audio and video files, share photos and information and complete a variety of other tasks.

Web analytics: It is the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of Internet data for the purpose of understanding who visitors to a Web site are and optimizing the overall Web site.

Web-based tools: Google, Yahoo and a host of other commercial organizations provide an increasing range of free or low-cost tools including email, calendars, word processing and spreadsheets that can be used on the web rather than on a desktop.

Webinar: This is short for Web-based seminar; a webinar is used to conduct live meetings, lectures, presentations or workshops over the Web.

For additional information or any assistance with any questions or concerns you may have regarding Safe Environment in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee

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