

DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

(Policy Requirements Governing Diocesan, Parish, and School Ministries Involving Minors and Vulnerable Individuals—Including Youth Ministry, Faith Formation, Catholic Schools, Camps/Retreats, Multicultural Ministry, Informal Guidance Settings, and Group Ministries Involving Vulnerable Adults)

Effective February 2019

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To Those Who Minister in the Diocese of Owensboro,

By virtue of our baptism, every Christian is called to share in the ministry of Jesus Christ. This represents both wondrous privilege and awesome responsibility; and if every person does not answer this call, the Church and the world are diminished. Embracing our varied callings of service and witness requires all to act in humility, in charity, and in justice. We are called to love and serve as Jesus loves and serves, and as such, aspire to the noblest of standards, most especially in service to children, young people, and the vulnerable.

The Diocese of Owensboro has set forth policy requirements for all who join us in our Gospel ministries. These have been developed over the years to meet the needs of youth ministers and religious educators, Catholic school personnel, and all who may find themselves working with minors and vulnerable adults as part of the Catholic Church. These spell out the philosophy, principles and specific requirements that must govern our actions as ministers, employees, and volunteers in positions of leadership.

Please study these requirements and incorporate them fully into your work to assure that the dignity and value of every person may always be affirmed and safeguarded. These guidelines assure that each of us, and our beloved Catholic Church, may act with the highest regard for all God's children. It is my fervent prayer that these guidelines continue the path of renewing the confidence of all people that the Catholic Church will be a safe and holy place for all to gather and learn and celebrate in God's name.

In Christ's love,

Most Reverend William F. Medley
Bishop of Owensboro

INTRODUCTION

In 2002 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) created the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (revised in 2018). It was a response to the flawed handling of sexual abuse cases within the American Catholic Church. The Charter and its related Essential Norms require dioceses to (a) have policies in place to address allegations of abuse and (b) to strengthen child protection efforts through education, screening, and “standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries.”

This diocese’s sexual abuse policy (SAP), most recently revised in 2014 (*Diocese of Owensboro Revised Sexual Abuse Policy and Procedures*), describes the proper response to sexual abuse allegations and the diocese’s efforts to keep children and young people safe in all its programs. Article 12 of that policy specifically focuses on preventative actions.

This Safe Environment Policy clarifies how those preventative actions are to be implemented in all diocesan programs. It is intended for all diocesan, deanery-level, and parish activities/programs involving minors and vulnerable adults, including youth ministry, faith formation, Catholic schools, camps/retreats, multicultural ministry, informal guidance settings, and group ministries involving vulnerable adults.

The diocesan Office of Safe Environment can assist with questions.

CREATING SAFE ENVIRONMENTS FOR MINORS (UNDER 18)

Dealing with Known Sex Offenders: Some individuals have been identified as high Safe-Environment risks because they are known sex offenders. Parishes and schools should contact the diocesan Office of Safe Environment for help in designing specific standards of conduct for such an individual, incorporating any legal restrictions placed on that individual.

Types of Adult Involvement:

The Safe Environment Policy addresses the risks inherent within the diocesan Church’s settings whenever adults acting in the name of the Church interact with minors or vulnerable adults.

General Events: Parents/guardians maintain primary responsibility for the safety of their children at events designed for families of all ages (e.g. Mass, parish socials/picnics, sporting events not held during the school day, fall festivals, ethnic celebrations and other family faith gatherings in homes, outreach efforts, etc.). Organizers of such events should incorporate child safety considerations into their plans but also help parents/guardians understand their responsibilities.

Safe-Environment-Compliant Adults at Youth Activities:

Some adults are placed in positions of authority or supervision over minors.

The person responsible for overseeing any activity or event governed by this policy will be considered the lead supervisor. That lead supervisor must be at least 21 years of age and Safe-Environment-compliant.

No one should be left alone in a supervisory capacity. There should always be a minimum of two Safe-Environment-compliant adults even if a teen under the age of 18 is assisting with a youth activity (see SAP, Article 12.5.5).

Safe Environment compliance is needed for all the following:

- any person employed, full- or part-time, by the diocese, one of its parishes or schools, or any other organization connected with the diocese
 - Diocesan guidelines for employment apply, including those in the diocesan sexual abuse policy. (See SAP, Article 12.2.2).
 - Safe Environment procedures are required for each employee whether or not that individual is directly working with minors. Employees occupy a visible and important role with real or potential access to information, money, or persons being served.
 - Safe Environment procedures are only one part of the process for hiring an individual.
- adults participating in an overnight situation involving minors or vulnerable adults
- adults placed in a position of authority, trust, or supervision (of a minor or vulnerable adult)
- special circumstances: To address risks for a particular setting or event, the diocese, deanery, school, or parish may require Safe Environment compliance prior to any involvement.
- Supervisory adults from other dioceses who are supervising at events within the Diocese of Owensboro must provide documentation from their diocese of compliance with their diocesan Safe Environment policies, as set forth by the USCCB.

In extraordinary circumstances where the lead supervisor learns that one of the other planned-for Safe-Environment-compliant adults has become unavailable, options are: [a] ask another known adult to accept and sign the Adult Code of Conduct (Form D-4) to assist for this one activity (never an option for an overnight or out-of-town event), or [b] cancel and reschedule the activity.

Non-Supervisory Adults at Youth Activities: Some adults involved with events for minors and/or vulnerable adults are not placed in positions of authority or supervision. They come as adult participants or as parent observers. Form B (Emergency Medical Release and Health Information for Adults) or its equivalent provides information in case of an emergency. In addition, those individuals should complete and submit the Adult Code of Conduct (Form D-4). Contact the diocesan Office of Safe Environment for help in addressing any issues.

When a youth event includes non-supervisory adult involvement, the level of supervision must increase. Youth participants need help understanding which adults are there in a supervisory capacity, and thus are available to assist them. Possible options for these situations include:

- Non-supervisory adults may be specifically assigned to be monitored by an individual who is Safe-Environment-compliant.
- Additional supervisory adults (not already assigned to other responsibilities) can be added to monitor the setting, e.g. hallways, restrooms, isolated areas.

In Support of Family Life: Adults acting in the name of the Church (whether employees or volunteers) may find that they interact with minors or vulnerable adults outside the scope of planned diocesan events because of family or other outside relationships (e.g. teachers who are also parents, permanent deacons with younger families, etc.). To best maintain good healthy relationships in those settings, adults should:

- promote good physical and emotional boundaries;

- communicate adequately with a young person's parents/guardians about safe boundaries being maintained;
- seek guidance and request accountability from parents/guardians, pastor, principal, supervisor, or individual in authority to avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

Types of Youth Involvement

Minors (Under 18) Assisting at Youth Activities: Minors who wish to assist in programs for younger participants are encouraged to do so; but those minors are never to be put in authority over the participants. They may assist the adult leaders, but the Safe-Environment-compliant adults retain responsibility for oversight throughout. In addition, the adults must also recognize that these younger assistants are part of the group they are responsible for protecting through Safe Environment policies.

Minors Who are Participants: Minors are not independent. Parents/guardians maintain primary responsibility for the safety of their children and have the right to know where they are and what they are doing.

For purposes of this policy, students in high schools, including those who have reached their eighteenth birthday, are considered as minors whenever they are simply participating in activities, and the protections of this policy apply to them.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Becoming Safe-Environment-Compliant Adults:

As a reminder, no one should be left alone in a supervisory capacity. There should always be a minimum of two Safe-Environment-compliant adults (per SAP, Article 12.5.5) even for small groups. That is true even if a teen under the age of 18 is assisting.

Adults aged 21 and over who become Safe-Environment-compliant can transport minors and be the lead supervisor, that is, the person responsible for overseeing any activity or event for youth. For their safety, adults aged 18 through 20 years who become Safe-Environment-compliant have limitations on their responsibilities. They may not transport, act as chaperones (for off-site events), or be the lead supervisor.

Immigration status does not automatically exclude an adult from meeting Safe Environment requirements.

To become Safe-Environment-compliant, an adult (at least 18 years of age) needs all the following:

1. Successfully complete a diocesan background check (per SAP, Article 12.2.1). Background checks cover a period of five (5) years, at which point a new background check must be completed.
2. Complete a diocesan-determined Safe Environment training program (per SAP, Article 12.1.1) and provide evidence of successful completion to the appropriate coordinator/supervisor. This training must be completed once every five (5) years.

3. Read and acknowledge one's acceptance of the Adult Code of Conduct (Form D-4) (per SAP, Article 12.3.4).
 - a. The diocese has certain expectations, listed in the Code of Conduct, for those choosing to be involved in activities with minors. Individuals must specifically agree to follow those standards.
 - b. Schools are expected to annually provide evidence of staff review of the Code of Conduct to the diocesan Office of Safe Environment.
 - c. Other ministry locations are also encouraged to have supervisory adults review the Code of Conduct regularly.
4. Read the diocesan sexual abuse policy and acknowledge one's acceptance of it (per SAP, Article 1.3.2).

General Policy Information:

1. As noted above in this document, students eighteen years of age or older who are still participating in diocesan high-school-level programs will be treated as minors in planning events; however, under the law, they are adults and all civil laws apply.
2. Participants who transport themselves to and from youth activities, on-site or off-site, do so at the discretion of their parents/guardians. Participants are not allowed to leave during the activity or transport other participants to/from the activity without expressed permission from the parents/guardians involved.
3. In keeping with the Catechism and Church teaching, individuals will be identified by their gender at birth. Individuals deserve to be treated with dignity when dealing with all issues of gender/sexuality.
4. Some adults have successfully completed all the requirements for supervisory adults but have either physical or intellectual impairments that might limit their abilities to fully protect or supervise in certain situations. In those circumstances the ministry location and diocesan Office of Safe Environment should work together to determine necessary restrictions. (An individual can contact the diocese to begin that discussion.)
5. All communication with minors, whether in person, through technology, or any other means, should reflect the Diocese of Owensboro's policies. To provide reasonable transparency and accountability regarding communications passing between the institution, its adult supervisors, and the young people:
 - a. parents/guardians should be informed of communication tools being used,
 - b. only communication tools that keep historical records should be used,
 - c. work/ministry email addresses should be established and used for program communications,
 - d. communications should avoid isolated settings (private chats, instant messaging, texting, etc.). Communications between adults and youth should include at least two adults in emails, texts, etc.
6. Program/activity organizers should communicate clearly to participants and parents/guardians the details and times involved for activities. This includes earliest allowable arrival time, times for leaving and returning (if applicable) and expected pick-up time. If any participants arrive early or remain past pick-up time, follow the Adult Code of Conduct (Form D-4) regarding adults and minors present.

7. Programs or outreach to minors, including any off-site events, may not be initiated without the **prior** approval of the pastor / principal and incorporation of Safe Environment policies.
8. Supervisory adults should reasonably be available and visible at all times during youth activities/ events, take part in enforcing the rules, and assist as needed.
9. The possession of firearms for the transportation, events, meetings, to include all participation etc., involving youth and adults is strictly prohibited.
10. Audiovisual, music (including lyrics), and print resources used in programs should be screened **prior to use** by an adult authorized by the program director to ensure the appropriateness for the participants. In order to use a PG-13-rated movie or movies rated with an even stronger designation, the permission of parents/guardians must be specifically documented.
11. Priority must be given during any Church activities to ensure the fulfillment of Sunday or Holy Day obligations.
12. Providing the Sacrament of Reconciliation in an open setting best achieves the goals of transparency and accountability. The diocese can assist with specific planning. (See Adult Code of Conduct—Form D-4.)
13. The Catholic Catechism states that “The right to the exercise of freedom, especially in religious and moral matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of man” (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1747). Therefore, while youth participants should be encouraged to take advantage of sacramental opportunities, (e.g. Reconciliation, Eucharist) they should never be forced to participate. Respectful attendance for non-participants can be taught and expected.
14. For on-site activities (faith formation, youth ministry, etc.) there should always be a minimum of two Safe-Environment-compliant adults. The lead supervisor must be at least 21 years of age and Safe-Environment-compliant. Depending on the ages of participants or the size of the group, planners should provide a reasonable number of additional supervisory adults to handle the group’s needs.

Forms Related to Ministering with Minors:

1. **Form A**—Basic information for any child/student participants in youth activities: Form A includes basic contact information, an emergency medical release, and a permission form with a liability release.
2. **Form B**—Emergency Medical Release and Health Information Form for Adults: Form B is needed for any adults attending youth functions.
3. **Form C or C-Schools**—Activity Information Form: Form C or C-Schools is used when a youth activity requires transportation.
4. **Forms D-1 to D-3**—Youth Codes of Conduct: The age-appropriate Code of Conduct should be read and signed by participant and parent/legal guardian.
 - a. Grades K-2 Code of Conduct (Form D-1)
 - b. Grades 3-5 Code of Conduct (Form D-2)
 - c. Grades 6-12 Code of Conduct (Form D-3)
5. **Form D-4**—Adult Code of Conduct: This form is used for both supervisory and non-supervisory adults involved in youth activities.
6. **Form E**—Volunteer Drivers Form
7. **Form E-1**—Liability Coverage for Leased or Hired Vehicles

8. **Form F**—Incident Report: Form F is used for every incident that involves professional medical attention or for which potential medical attention might be required. This may include other incidents (i.e. damaging property).
9. **Form H**—Guide for Reporting Abuse: Form H collects the information needed when an individual needs to report suspected abuse/neglect to civil authorities.

Special Situations:

Reporting Suspected Abuse: Any person who obtains information of known or suspected physical or sexual abuse, neglect, exploitation and/or harassment of any individual under age 18, shall report said information immediately to the proper authorities (the Cabinet for Health and Family Services using the Kentucky Child Protection Hot Line—1-877-KYSAFE1 or 1-877-597-2331 toll-free—and/or law enforcement officials). After the report has been made, the adult making a report should inform his or her supervisor/principal.—Form H (Guide for Reporting Abuse) is an available tool.

Medical Emergencies: If a minor becomes seriously ill or has an accident while participating in a diocesan-, school-, or parish-sponsored event, a supervisory adult must contact the parent/legal guardian.

- a. Form A (participant’s basic medical information)
- b. Form F (Incident Report Form) for incident for which potential medical attention might be required

Natural Disaster Emergencies: Supervisory adults should receive assistance from the parish or school so they understand the crisis plan. The lead supervisor is the official contact person for any communication.

Risky Behaviors: In the event of a potentially violent situation (causing a risk either to youth or to others), the priority will be for safety. Parents/guardians should be contacted as soon as possible. The lead supervisor is the official contact person for any communication.

Policy Violations/Adult Conduct Concerns: All adults, whether supervising or participating in activities for minors or vulnerable adults, are required to read and accept a Code of Conduct. The Adult Code of Conduct (Form D-4) defines appropriate and inappropriate conduct and reminds individuals that they need to report violations.

A person observing inappropriate conduct can work directly to correct the problem behavior if they feel able; however, if they feel unable to or if the behavior is continuing or is serious, the person should promptly get help from an appropriate level of supervisor or from the Office of Safe Environment for the safety of all.

Problematic Personal Items: To safeguard all involved, the diocese has a Search & Seizure Policy (available on diocesan web site).

Additional notes:

1. If an adult asks a student/participant to hand over something, that is not considered a search.
2. If an adult asks a student/participant to take something out of his/her pocket, that is not considered a search.

3. If personal items (including cell phones, other electronic equipment, keys, etc.) disrupt or interfere with the individual's or others' participation, they may be seized temporarily. Such items will be returned to the participant or parent/guardian at the end of the activity/day. If cell phones or personal electronic equipment are taken away, they must not be searched except by law enforcement personnel.

Exposure Control Plan: The diocesan Exposure Control Plan has been developed for the prevention and control of diseases caused by blood-borne pathogens. It represents measures required for implementation and adherence to OSHA standards.

Off-Site: Additional Requirements When Not at Usual Church/School Site

Preparing for Off-Site Activities: Youth activities that involve travel or overnight stays must be **pre-approved** by the pastor or principal; i.e. the activity may not be scheduled or advertised before the pastor or principal has approved the request.

The Activity Information Form/Liability Release Form (Form C or Form C-Schools) includes details of the activity, transportation details, and related costs in order to provide parents/guardians with all relevant facts. The liability release provides a release for the specific event(s).

General Reminders for Off-Site Planning:

1. Organizers should clearly communicate to participants, their parents/guardians, and to chaperones the plans and expectations for any activity. (Form C is required if transportation is provided.)
2. Organizers should ensure that supervisory adults and youth participants have reviewed the appropriate Codes of Conduct immediately before the event.
3. Adults should inform minors of safety rules and security measures prior to the trip and remind them periodically during the trip.
4. During the day, there should be periodic group meetings to be sure everyone is present.
5. A lone adult shall never engage in an overnight trip with a minor or minors. (Exception: A parent/legal guardian may participate with his/her own child/ren only.)
6. No adult should be alone with a minor (anyone under age 18) or youth participant, as noted in the Adult Code of Conduct (Form D-4).
7. Completed Forms A, B, and C should be readily available if needed for any reason during activity.
8. Drivers transporting minors for events should abide by all diocesan transportation policies, including those noted below.

Adult Chaperones:

1. A chaperone is a supervisory adult who is assigned to specifically accompany and supervise activity participants off-site.
2. All chaperones must be at least 21 years of age.
3. A supervisory adult under age 21 (18-20) cannot be the lead supervisor and cannot be considered a chaperone.
4. **No** activity should have fewer than 2 chaperones. If the group includes both males and females, then chaperones should also include both. If the group is single-gender, then at

least one chaperone should be of that same gender. This is absolutely required for overnight and/or out-of-town activities.

5. Minimum Number of Chaperones (for all off-site situations)*:
 - a. High-school-level activities: one (1) chaperone per ten (10) minors,
 - b. Middle-school-level activities: one (1) chaperone per seven (7) minors
 - c. Under-middle-school-level activities: one (1) chaperone for every five (5) minors
- * Note for Catholic Schools: Some school-sponsored activities do not require the recommended level of chaperones because there is other support available. In these cases the chaperone number would be determined by the principal.
6. Chaperones should reasonably be available and visible throughout the event(s), take part in enforcing the rules, and assist as needed.

Transportation:

1. Drivers for youth events must be at least 21 years of age and Safe-Environment compliant (exception: chartered vehicle drivers).
2. Commercial vehicles should be used for transportation whenever possible. If using privately owned vehicles, the owner’s vehicle insurance is primary.
3. All volunteer drivers must follow all the diocese’s transportation requirements (Volunteer Drivers Form—Form E; Liability Coverage for Leased or Hired Vehicles-Form E-1). The diocese’s Office of Administration can assist with questions.
4. Reminder: Driver’s information on Form E may be more current than Safe Environment background check information for a driver.
5. When only one vehicle is being used to transport participants, that vehicle must include the required number of Safe-Environment-compliant adults.
6. When multiple vehicles are traveling together:
 - a. no adult should be alone in a vehicle with a single minor (anyone under age 18) unless he/she is the parent/legal guardian of the minor.
 - b. all drivers should drive directly to and from designated locations without unnecessary stops. Acceptable stops (which should be promptly communicated to other vehicles in the group) might include: illness, emergency bathroom breaks, and/or vehicle problems.
 - c. all drivers should have written directions/maps and be briefed on the area.
 - d. each vehicle should have compatible emergency communication devices (cell phones, etc.) along with appropriate information such as channel and/or cell phone numbers. Be aware that some areas have limited cell reception service.
 - e. it is strongly recommended that at least one vehicle be equipped with a first aid kit and a first aid manual.

Insurance:

1. All privately owned vehicles’ insurance is primary. (See diocesan “Automobile/ Vehicle Ownership” policy for further details.)
2. If a particular location requires a Certificate of Proof of Insurance for diocesan liability, a minimum of one week is required to obtain the Certificate from the Office of Administration.

Overnight Trips: Safe Environment questions regarding travel or overnight accommodations should be directed to the Office of Safe Environment before any applicable event.

General Reminders:

1. As noted above in this document, students eighteen years of age or older who are still participating in diocesan high school-level programs will be treated as minors in planning events; however, under the law, they are adults and all civil laws apply. Therefore organizers need authorization from a parent/legal guardian when overnight accommodations mix adult student participants with minors.
2. As stated earlier, participants' emergency information needs to be taken on all overnight or out-of-town trips for parish or diocesan events (Form A for minors, Form B for adults) in case the need for medical attention arises during an event.

General Overnight Accommodations:

1. All sleeping areas must be clearly segregated between males and females.
2. All sleeping areas should be segregated between adults and minors. When adults are required to be in the same larger room with minors, their sleeping accommodations should be in groups of two with good visual access to the entire sleeping area. Bathroom utilization plans need to be developed to ensure separate times and/or spaces for adults and minors.
3. Adults need a plan for monitoring sleeping areas throughout the night and should communicate that plan to parents/guardians before the trip.
4. For tent camping larger tents that accommodate more people should be used whenever possible to allow for better supervision.
5. One adult is never to stay alone overnight in the same tent with a minor or minors. (Exception: A parent/legal guardian may stay in the same tent with his/her own child/ren only.)

Hotel/Motel Accommodations:

1. Care is to be taken when booking hotels for groups. If possible, all of the rooms should be on the same floor or location in the hotel. (Adults should request when making reservations.)
2. Adjoining rooms should be requested when possible for better supervision. The group leader must check all rooms before assigning them to groups to avoid males and females having adjoining doors.
3. Adults are never to stay alone overnight in the same room with a minor or minors. (Exception: A parent/legal guardian may stay in the same room with his/her own child/ren only.)
4. No minor should be allowed to leave the hotel property without authorized adult supervision (i.e. leaving with parent/legal guardian with the knowledge of the event's lead supervisor or leaving with at least two supervisory adults).
5. Chaperones should set a curfew and make a room check at night.
6. For small groups at least one designated adult should be available throughout the night to handle any concerns. (The front desk should know who that person is and his/her room number.)
7. For larger groups adults must actively monitor the area throughout the night: either paid, bonded security personnel or at least two other designated adults (male and female for mixed groups).

PROVIDING INFORMAL GUIDANCE (to Minors or Adults):

“Informal guidance,” as described here, refers to listening/direction provided by adults acting in the name of the Church (Church representatives) to minors/vulnerable adults under their supervision or to other adults who seek their advice. It is specifically distinguished from formal counseling provided by certified counselors in a professional setting.

1. Church representatives must not step beyond their competence and shall refer to other professionals when appropriate.
2. Church representatives should determine if the individual requesting assistance is already in a counseling relationship with a counseling professional. If so, the individual should be encouraged to share with their counselor about this secondary support.
3. Church representatives should clearly communicate what role they can provide to the individual. Generally this should be focused on spiritual assistance.
4. Church representatives should carefully consider the possible consequences before providing guidance to someone with whom they have a pre-existing relationship.
5. Church representatives assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining **clear, appropriate, professional boundaries** in all guidance relationships. They should presume that the potential for exploitation or harm exists for either party. In circumstances with a minor, either a parent/guardian or a supervisor should be notified that informal guidance has been requested.
6. To protect the Church representative and the person seeking guidance, when there are boundary concerns on either side, the Church representative should document those concerns, report them to the pastor/supervisor, and refer the person seeking guidance to a more appropriate individual.
7. Church representatives shall be respectful of the trust placed in them and honor that information appropriately. However, when necessary, the Church representative will contact the proper authorities or other professionals to protect the parties affected and to prevent harm (when there is clear and imminent danger either to the person seeking guidance or to others).
8. Any one-on-one meetings must be held in a public area or in an area that is visible to others (such as in an office with an interior window or an open door) so that another individual can be present outside the room as a witness.
9. Including # 8 above, all provisions listed within the Adult Code of Conduct (Form D-4) apply within any guidance setting, whether the person seeking assistance is a minor or an adult.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULTS MINISTERING WITH ELDERLY INDIVIDUALS
AND/OR OTHER VULNERABLE ADULTS**

The “Diocese of Owensboro Revised Sexual Abuse Policy and Procedures” (SAP, Article 2.10) includes the following definition:

VULNERABLE PERSON refers to (a) any person under 18 years of age; (b) any person 18 years of age or older who habitually lacks the use of reason (CIC, cc.97§2, 99; 2011 revision of *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* [Charter]); or (c) any other adult whose impairments place him/her under the protection of Kentucky Revised Statutes (K.R.S.) 209, which covers abuse and neglect of adults.

General Policies:

The Diocese of Owensboro will handle all group parish/school/diocesan settings with “vulnerable adults” (vulnerable persons at least 18 years of age) in the same manner that it handles situations with minors, following Safe Environment policies for the protection of the vulnerable adults.

The Diocese of Owensboro will follow its “Guidelines for Ministry with the Elderly and Vulnerable Adults” when those acting in the name of the Church are providing other Church outreach to adults outside Church settings (see Appendix).

For those ministering to vulnerable adults outside group settings, the compliance requirements are:

1. Complete a diocesan-determined training program for working with vulnerable adults.
 - a. Successful completion and documentation of this training is required every five (5) years.
2. Read the “Diocese of Owensboro Guidelines for Ministry with the Elderly and Vulnerable Adults” and acknowledge acceptance of the standards of behavior expected. The guidelines focus on:
 - a. Minimizing risks to avoid the possibility of unsafe or compromising situations
 - b. Providing transparency and credibility for the person’s ministry by reducing privacy and secrecy concerns, and
 - c. Creating paths of accountability, oversight, and assistance for those providing ministry to vulnerable adults.
3. Read the diocesan sexual abuse policy and formally acknowledge acceptance of that policy.
4. Complete diocesan background check requirements for those ministering with vulnerable adults. Background checks cover a period of five (5) years, at which point a new background check must be completed.
5. Individuals wishing to provide transportation on behalf of a Church entity should submit a current Volunteer Driver’s Form (Form E) to the parish, etc.
6. A Transportation Consent Form should be signed and submitted to the ministry location, either by the independent vulnerable adult or by their guardian, as appropriate. This document provides accountability and makes clear the risks in transporting, though never excusing an individual from negligence.