

**The policy outlined below should serve as a course of action when considering the use of social networking tools on the Internet.**

### **General Guidelines:**

When posting, commenting, or replying to internet sites, it is prohibited to use obscene, harassing, derogatory, defamatory or otherwise potentially scandalous comments, links, and/or images which reflect, discredit, or cause embarrassment to the Catholic Church, Diocese of Columbus, or any person or group of individuals.

Posts, comments, and/or replies must never contradict the teachings of the Catholic Church.

It is prohibited to divulge, without verifiable consent of a parent or guardian, any information that would jeopardize the safety or well being of any person or group of individuals. This includes but is not limited to pictures of any person younger than the age of 18. Also prohibited is the posting of full names, home address, email address, telephone numbers or any information that would allow someone to identify or contact a person younger than the age of 18. Verifiable consent may take the form of a written permission from the parent or guardian. Record of consent must be retained on file until the person turns 18 years of age or the consent is revoked by the parent or guardian.

It is prohibited to disclose in, post, comment, or reply to information that is understood to be held in confidence by the Diocese of Columbus.

Recognition and respect of intellectual property should be maintained at all times. Care must be taken so as not to infringe upon the exclusive rights of others, musical, literary and or artistic works. It is the responsibility of the individual to abide by all copyright laws of the United States of America.

### **Enforcement**

Failure to comply with any of the guidelines and provisions outlined here will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination. The Department for Education reserves the right to change this policy at any time and at its discretion. The interpretation and administration of this policy will be made by diocesan officials in light of changing circumstances and events.

## **Distinguishing between Ministry and Personal Websites:**

A ministry website (MW) is a web presence created for the sole purpose of ministry for the Department for Education. This includes but is not limited to class/course, athletic, and student activity sites. Before these sites are created, permission must be obtained from the office director or administrator. If the site involves the participation of students or children, and the participation requires a username and password, the same access must be provided to child's parent or guardian. The Department for Education must be informed of the existence of any related website and be provided a password that enables the office to view the site.

A personal website (PW) is a web presence created to share personal communication with friends and associates. **Granting access to these sites by (unrelated) children is prohibited.** Accessing personal websites during work hours is prohibited. The Department for Education reserves the right to review an employee's personal website if there are reasonable grounds for believing the guidelines are being violated.

## **Web 2.0 Components**

**Second Life** - Second Life is a massive multi-player universe (MMU) set in a [3D](#) virtual world.

(MW) It is prohibited to create a second life environment within or as a standalone ministry website without prior permission of the Department for Education.

(PW) Creation and/or participation in second life sites must follow the general guidelines listed above and be consistent with the tenants of the Catholic Church.

## **Wikis -**

- A wiki invites all users to edit any page or to create new pages within the wiki web site, using only a (general) web browser...<sup>1</sup>
- A wiki seeks to involve the **invited user** in an ongoing process of creation and collaboration that constantly changes the Web site landscape.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ward Cunningham and co-author [Bo Leuf](#), in their book [The Wiki Way: Quick Collaboration on the Web](#)

(MW) The creation of wikis should be limited to those situations which encourages dynamic participation and collaboration in the creation of a site that addresses a specific and pre-defined purpose. All wikis should be closed to the general public and serve only a pre-defined group.

(PW) Creation and/or participation in wikis must follow the general guidelines listed above and be consistent with the tenants outlined in diocesan safe environment policies.

**Photo (Video) Sharing** - Photo sharing is the publishing or transfer of a user's digital photos online, thus enabling the user to share them with others (whether publicly or privately). This functionality is provided through both websites and applications that facilitate the upload and display of images. The term can also be loosely applied to the use of online photo galleries that are set up and managed by individual users, including photoblogs and Youtube.

(MW) Photo sharing should be limited to those images that are directly associated with the purpose of the ministry, i.e. field trip photos, facility photos, etc. Photos of individuals or small groups of individuals should be uploaded or displayed only with verifiable consent.

(PW) Creation and/or participation in photo (video) sharing sites must follow the general guidelines listed above and be consistent with the tenants outlined in diocesan safe environment policies. Any images deemed inappropriate, independent of when they were made, must be removed. Sharing images on a personal site that were created for a ministry website is prohibited. All available privacy settings should be enabled.

**Blogs:** A blog is a website where entries are written in chronological order and commonly displayed in reverse chronological order.

(MW) Blogs are permitted as long as they are kept current and maintained on a regular basis. They are to be used as a means of sharing information (not opinions). The allowing of comments is permitted only if they are reviewed and approved by the moderator before they are posted. Comment moderation can be very time consuming and requires forethought by the individuals and their administrators impacted by this decision.

(PW) Creation and/or participation blog sites must follow the general guidelines listed above and be consistent with the tenants outlined in diocesan safe environment policies. If comments are permitted, the user must review the site daily so as to not allow violation of the guidelines by others. The employee is required to put the following notice in a reasonably prominent place on the site:

***“The views expressed on this website are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer.”***

**Podcast:** A podcast is a digital media file, or a series of such files, that is distributed over the internet using syndication feeds for playback on portable media players, and personal computers. A podcast is a specific type of webcast which, like “radio,” can mean either the content itself or the method by which it is syndicated; the latter is also termed podcasting.

(MW) Podcasts are permitted when they are in compliance with the general guidelines established by the Diocese of Columbus.

(PW) Creation of podcasts must follow the general guidelines listed above and be consistent with the tenants outlined in diocesan safe environment policies.

**Social Networking** – refers to a website(s) in which users can add individuals as “friends” and send them messages and update their profiles to notify “friends” about themselves. Additionally, users can join networks organized by workplace, school, or college. Facebook allows anyone who declares themselves to be aged 13 or older to become a member of the website.

Social networking [websites](#) allow users to create and customize their own profiles with photos, videos, and information about themselves. “Friends” can browse the profiles of other friends and write messages on their pages.

As is the case with Facebook, the profile has a "wall" where friends can post comments. Because the wall is viewable by all the user's friends, wall postings are basically a public conversation. Therefore, it is usually best not to write personal messages on your friends' walls. Instead, you can send a person a private message, which will show up in his or her private [inbox](#), similar to an [e-mail](#) message.

Facebook provides an easy way for friends to keep in touch and for individuals to have a presence on the Web without needing to build a website. Facebook allows each user to set privacy settings.

It is incumbent upon employees of the diocese who consider using this type of web presence to learn of the limitations and security risks inherent in this type of site. Recent concerns of Facebook include but are not limited to:

1. Personal information is being shared with third parties;
2. Privacy settings revert to a less safe default mode after each redesign;
3. Facebook ads may contain malware;
4. An individual’s friends unknowingly make you vulnerable;
5. Scammers are creating fake profiles.

(MW) Prior to the development of a social networking page, written approval must be obtained from the administrator or office director, whichever is appropriate. Final approval must be given from the Episcopal Moderator for Education. The Episcopal Moderator for Education must be informed of the existence of any Ministry Website and provided a password that enables her office to view the site.

So as to provide timely response and adequate management of the posts, comments, and replies there should be two adult non-related employees appointed to moderate the site.

Note: Before social networking sites are employed, the time required for maintenance must be considered since social networking sites are blocked in schools and the Department for Education. Maintenance needs to be accomplished off-site.

(PW) The Diocese expects its employees to exercise due diligence before entering into a social network. Text, images and/or video may be misconstrued when taken out of context. All of the general guidelines of this policy must be adhered to on personal websites. It should be noted that when dealing with youth as a profession, it is not uncommon for unintentional consequences to arise from what is thought to be harmless and comical actions. Employees are cautioned to evaluate their postings carefully and never consider them to be exclusive to their closed group of friends. Should material that was meant to be confidential become public by any means, the employee is still subject to the enforcement cited in this document.

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Note: **Twitter** –falls under a different category...It is designed as a means of communicating to a group of people quickly. A “tweet” does not facilitate nor expect a response. If school personnel wishes to use twitter, they may only send messages that pertain to adults or currently registered students.