

Guidelines for Overnight Trips with Youth and Teens

The Diocese of Lansing is committed to safeguarding the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of the children of our parishes and schools. To that end, the following guidelines are adopted for overnight trips for persons under the age of eighteen years (“students”).

1. The ratio of adults to students cannot be less than 1:6. That is, there must be at least one adult chaperone for an overnight trip with up to six students; there must be at least two adult chaperones for a trip with up to twelve students; and so on.
2. An overnight trip must also include at least one employed leader from the parish or school. The leader(s) can be included in the count of adult chaperones for the purpose of the ratio stated in the preceding paragraph.
3. The role of an adult chaperone is to guide students by word and example. A chaperone may prevent, halt, or correct misbehavior, but may not impose a sanction for misbehavior. Sanctions are to be imposed only by the employed leader from the parish or school.
4. Except as provided in this paragraph, an adult chaperone may not be housed in the same room with a student. A chaperone may, however, be housed with the chaperone’s own child. Further, adults may be housed with students in a large area such as a dormitory or gymnasium, provided that at least two adult chaperones are assigned to the room.
5. In no event are males and females to be housed in the same room. Where a door connects two hotel rooms, both rooms are to be occupied by persons of the same sex.
6. If possible, all members of a group that are staying in a hotel should be housed on the same floor, along the same hallway.
7. When, because of the nature of the trip, students are not always under direct adult supervision, they must have a ready means (such as a cellular telephone or an agreed-upon meeting place) of contacting an adult chaperone.
8. When feasible, each adult chaperone must possess a charged cellular telephone. A two-way radio or similar device may be employed instead, if reasonable to do so. Cell phones must be kept charged and on at all times, though they may be set to vibrate rather than ring when necessary, as during Mass. The phone number must be made known to the parish or school.
9. Before the trip begins, the parish or school must communicate the rules for the trip, including the safety rules, to the students. At appropriate intervals during the trip, the adult chaperones should remind the students of those rules.
10. The parish or school may add rules that increase, but do not decrease, the safety provided by these guidelines.