



### **Guidelines for Field Trips**

Although we recognize that much of the educational experience happens outside the classroom, the Diocesan Department of Catholic Schools notes that it discourages overnight trips for students.

All schools should include in their student handbooks the statement that “participation in extracurricular activities, including sports teams, field trips, retreats, and graduation exercises is a privilege and not a right, and the school has the duty and right to impose conditions on students’ participation.” Please note that conditions for participation should be written in the handbook, and the list should conclude with the statement: “and any other behavior deemed unacceptable by the principal.”

**Purpose:** The purpose of the school is to educate students, and therefore, the purpose of the field trip should be educational. Substantiation of this purpose can include lesson plans, worksheets, assessments, etc.

**Supervision:** The major legal responsibility of the school is the supervision of students. While past standards were *in loco parentis*, (in the place of the parents), the current standard for schools is *fiduciary*. That means that the school’s employees’ standard of supervision for children is more stringent than their supervision of their own biological children.

The number of chaperones ought to be determined by the number of students, and the age and level of development of the students. Knowing the age and characteristics of the group ought to inform the principal on the number of chaperones needed.

It is the responsibility of the principal or his/her designee to train the chaperones regarding their duties and responsibilities prior to the field trip. Again, students should be supervised at all times. Such information may include emergency procedures, accident reporting, maintenance of students’ medications, places/activities off-limits during the field trip, grouping and assignment of students to a chaperone, etc.

**Permission:** Students should always furnish written permission from a parent or guardian, and the principal or his/her designee should verify signatures. A phone call or an email from a parent is not sufficient, but a faxed signature is acceptable.

The school permission slip should include information on:

1. The date(s) and time of the trip
2. The destination
3. The means of transportation
4. A statement that the trip begins and ends at the school.
5. A place for the original signature of the parent/guardian

A set of permission slips should accompany the students on the trip, and a copy of each of the permission slips should be retained at the school.

When students are to cross state lines, permissions should be notarized; when they cross national lines, the permission slips should be notarized and students under the age of 16 need to furnish proof of their citizenship and birthplace. An original birth certificate with the official seal is sufficient for minor children, and a passport is also sufficient proof.

**Transportation:** Students should be transported by means of a reputable bus or transport company. Should principals need to engage parents to drive, they need to notify the parents of the students of this fact. If at all possible, the assignment of students to individual cars should be done randomly, for example, pulling names out of a hat.

Principals need to clarify with students and parents the fact that all field trips begin and end at school. Parents should not drive their own children or other children home directly from a field trip, but should stop at the school so that school authorities can ascertain the children's whereabouts.