

LEGAL ISSUES

TRIPS OFF CHURCH PROPERTY

Catechists can take children/youth outside if they remain on parish grounds. At no time can a catechist or staff member take children off church grounds during class time without prior notification of parents and a written permission slip from the parents. There is potential for injury and lawsuit any time children are taken from the premises, especially when parents are not notified in writing of this action. Following are some guidelines for trips off church property.

Off-grounds trips are a potential liability. Catechists and paid staff should understand that there is no inherent right to participate in such a trip. The catechist or staff can refuse participation to children whose conduct is less than satisfactory. Religious education leaders must understand that attendance at off campus activities cannot be compelled; parents have a right to refuse to allow their children to participate.

A signed [Youth Confidential Release Form](#) must be obtained for every trip off church property. A statement of expected behavior is part of that form.

Permission slips should also state the mode of transportation. It is recommended that buses should be used whenever possible. If private cars are used, that fact should be noted on the permission slip. Leaders are responsible to check for a current driver's license and automobile registration and up to date insurance of all private drivers for program trips. It is required that each driver complete a copy of the [Volunteer Driver Information Sheet](#).

All parish staff, including volunteers, must understand that permission slips are not absolute protection from a lawsuit. Courts expect that staff will act in a reasonable manner and protect young people from harm.

A Primer on Law for DREs and Youth Ministers,
Mary Angela Shaughnessy,
SCN, pg. 52-53

