

Youth Safeguarding: CRS Guidance for Working with Minors

CRS, in coordination with the USCCB's Secretariat for Child and Youth Protection, advises all adults working with minors to review CRS safe environment practices to ensure protocols meet the highest level of safeguarding standards.

Please note that this guidance is applicable to all CRS work, including campaign work, adult and university chapters, high school clubs and youth groups.

1. This guidance should be shared with the adult responsible for the youth engagement prior to the engagement to ensure that s/he understands the parameters of CRS staff youth engagement.
2. CRS staff may not interact with minor-aged youth without the accompaniment of an adult or a group of adults (e.g. school administrators, teaching staff or youth ministers) who have been fully vetted by the institutions they serve (e.g. school, parish). This is true both for in-person as well as virtual events.
3. CRS staff may not collect or receive youths' contact information (including but not limited to email, phone number, social media handles, etc.) nor may CRS staff contact or communicate with youth in any way (by email, phone, social media, etc.) regardless of whether another adult (e.g. the high school club adviser) is part of the communication. All communication must be with the adult advisor only, who may then pass on the info to youth as appropriate.
4. CRS staff must obtain appropriate permission prior recording video and/or taking pictures of youth engaged with CRS. Please use our photo permission forms to obtain permission.
5. CRS staff interaction with minors is comparable to that of a guest speaker visiting a school or parish either in person or virtually. CRS staff must always be accompanied by faculty or staff from the school or parish they are visiting.
6. CRS conducts background checks for external candidates prior to their hire, including county, state, and federal level criminal history and sex offender registry screening, and screenings for other global compliance and relevant regulations.
7. CRS staff are required to complete rigorous protection and safeguarding training, and sign codes of conduct that codify that CRS staff are:
 - a. Expected to treat all people with whom they have contact with respect, to actively prevent all forms of harassment, abuse, and exploitation, including all forms of sexual misconduct and trafficking, and to ensure our programs do no harm to the communities in which we work
 - b. Prohibited from facilitating or aiding another worker's harassing, abusive or exploitative behavior—whether tied to CRS or not; and
 - c. Obligated to report any concern or suspicion of harassment, abuse or exploitation

To ensure that CRS holds itself and our staff to the highest standards, CRS has rigorous policies and systems in place to ensure that our staff, affiliates, partners, suppliers, service providers, and community members can report harassment and safeguarding concerns, protected from the threat of retaliation.

8. There are currently no plans in place that would require or invite CRS staff or CRS adult volunteers to interact with minors without supervising adults from their affiliated institutions.

In conjunction with CRS safeguarding, rules and best practices should be followed in accordance with your diocesan guidance in all interactions with minors.