

Concerning the Use of Photos

When should you use a photo release?

If you are going to use a photo of a person in which the face is clearly recognizable, the diocesan office advises that you get a photo release signed by the individual, or by the guardian if the person is under 18 years of age. The release should be worded to indicate various ways the photo could be used. It is especially important to get a written photo release if you plan to use photos of minors or non-members, but it is a good practice even for photos of church employees.

It is the responsibility of the church to keep the photo release documentation. It will not be stored in a central diocesan location and may be requested if the photo is used in a broader distribution.

Why use photo releases?

Perhaps more as a matter of courtesy than of law, we should extend to our members, volunteers and people we serve the opportunity of knowing in advance where their image will likely appear. This is even more important now, due to the potential for repeated use of stock photos for other purposes, and because of the possibility of distribution of a particular photo on the web, with wider distribution than the individual subject would have imagined. Web photos, unlike photos in printed documents, can be downloaded and more easily reused by third parties. It is best practice, therefore, that any identifiable use of an individual photo through institutional publications or promotional efforts include use of a signed written release. These releases should be kept on file in a central office location. When in doubt, the best rule of thumb is to seek consent before using a photo of a readily identifiable individual.

What about using children's photos on the web site?

Web authors are encouraged to:

- Not use images of children without the express, written parental permission
- No identification/names should be used with photos
- Solicit comments from web pages through church channels only
- Not present copyrighted images, music or text on Web pages without specific written permission from the copyright owner
- Properly credit non-copyrighted images, music and text to the author and retain materials that establish authorship and the lack of copyright

Samples of acceptable Standard Release Forms may be accessed here:

http://www.nppa.org/professional_development/business_practices/releases