



DIOCESE OF TUCSON RISK MANAGEMENT ADVISORY

October 2011

DOGS AT CHURCHES AND SCHOOLS

Purpose

The purpose of this Advisory is to reinforce the need to identify and eliminate the risks presented by dogs owned by employees, staff, volunteers, and parents when allowed to be brought to or kept on school/church owned property.

It is becoming increasingly more popular for employees, staff, volunteers and parents to bring dogs to diocesan schools and churches. Animals/dogs by their nature are unpredictable. Even the most calm, well trained dog can become agitated and aggressive when in an unfamiliar environment with large numbers of people like at a church or school. Many children are inexperienced at dealing with dogs and may approach and treat dogs aggressively provoking a dog to respond in kind.

Basic Risk Management Strategies

1. **Avoid the Risk: Dogs should not be allowed on school or church property.**
 - a. Exceptions:
 - i. Certified Service Dogs (dogs for the blind or hearing impaired) or
 - ii. Dogs at rectories when not accessible to the general public.

It should be noted:

The State of Arizona has the following “Dog Bite Statute”:

Arizona law imposes strict liability on dog owners for injuries inflicted by their dog without respect to fault on the part of the owner. In Arizona, dogs do not get "one free bite". Owners are held strictly liable for injuries caused by their dog's actions and liability is imposed without regard to an owner's knowledge of the dog's viciousness.

Churches and schools have a legal duty for the safety of those who come onto their property. Churches and schools that knowingly allow dogs on their property, ratify this conduct which can result in vicarious liability for the church or school resulting from the actions of dogs and their owners.