



United in Faith, Hope and Love

Code of Conduct for Adult Volunteers Who Interact with Minors or Vulnerable Adults

This *Code of Conduct (Code)* of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis (Archdiocese) establishes standard policies and provides guidance for the service of parish, school, or archdiocesan volunteers. It is the mission of the Archdiocese to make disciples of Jesus Christ and to witness the love of Jesus Christ to all. We recognize, as disciples of Jesus Christ, that we must witness to Jesus both by what we say and what we do, and that our conduct should always seek to be in accord with the Faith which we profess. As Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before all, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 5:14).

This *Code* aims to further the Church’s mission by providing guidelines which achieve several overarching objectives:

- Promote authentic witness to Jesus Christ by those who serve in the Church,
- Protect, nurture, and guide minors, vulnerable adults and all others with whom we interact,
- Provide practical guidance to volunteers to enable them to serve effectively and safely,
- Promote personal well-being, and
- Build positive relationships founded upon respect, trust, and integrity.

This *Code* applies to conduct of volunteers that relates to their role interacting with minors or vulnerable adults within the Church.

An adult volunteer whose ministry involves either regular or unsupervised interaction with minors (anyone who has not reached the age of 18) or vulnerable adults (persons with physical, mental, or emotional conditions that render them unable to defend or protect themselves) must complete the Essential 3 before beginning volunteer service. The Essential 3 consists of: a background check; safe environment training; and agreement to adhere to this *Code*.

1. Ethical Standards for Personal Interactions

- 1.1 Volunteers will maintain appropriate boundaries and exercise reasonable and appropriate interactions with others.
- 1.2 Volunteers will relate to others with patience, courtesy and respect, and will work collaboratively and cooperatively with all those serving the Church.
- 1.3 Volunteers should use positive reinforcement and encouragement, and encourage others to do likewise.
- 1.4 Volunteers will dress appropriately and consistent with their volunteer roles and activities.

- 1.5 Volunteers, in their service to the Church, must conduct themselves in a manner consistent with Catholic teaching.
- 1.6 Volunteers must exercise discretion and confidentiality, and should consult with an immediate supervisor before disclosing confidential information to others.

2. Conduct with Minors or Vulnerable Adults

- 2.1 Volunteers must use prudent judgment and common sense when working with minors or vulnerable adults.
- 2.2 Volunteers should be aware of their own vulnerability and the vulnerability of others when working with minors or vulnerable adults. Volunteers should avoid any conduct that a reasonable person could misconstrue as improper. A team approach with appropriate supervision should be in place to promote a safe environment for all.
- 2.3 Volunteers should not meet alone with any unrelated minor. One-on-one activities are best held with staff supervision in a public area or an area visible to others through a window or open door.
- 2.4 Volunteers who minister to the home-bound and to vulnerable adults are encouraged to serve in the company of another safe environment trained adult whenever possible.
- 2.5 Physical contact with unrelated minors or vulnerable adults must be public, appropriate, and nonsexual. Some examples of permissible physical contact include:
 - Brief side hugs or an arm around the shoulder.
 - Hand-shakes or “high fives”
 - Holding hands while walking with young children or those unsteady.
 - Brief pat on the shoulder/upper back.
 - Holding hands during prayer.
 - Brief touching of hand, head, shoulder or arm.
- 2.6 Volunteers must not possess or use alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs when interacting with unrelated minors or vulnerable adults, nor provide these items to a minor or vulnerable adult. Volunteers should take great care to avoid use of medications that impair functioning or good judgment when volunteering with minors or vulnerable adults.
- 2.7 Volunteers must not acquire, possess or distribute any pornographic or sexually explicit, profane, or otherwise inappropriate materials, by any means or technology. Suspected child pornography must be referred to law enforcement immediately.
- 2.8 Volunteers must not travel in a vehicle with an unrelated minor or vulnerable adult without another safe environment trained adult present, except in documented emergencies. In documented situations where groups are being transported with only one adult driver in a vehicle, a sufficient number of drivers should be available to manage unanticipated situations.

- 2.9 Volunteers must not share private space or overnight accommodations (bedroom, hotel room, tent, camper, bed, etc.) with any unrelated minor or vulnerable adult.
- a. In situations (with minors) in which overnight accommodations are in open spaces (gymnasiums, classrooms, gathering spaces, etc.), actions should be taken to provide suitable supervision and create reasonable separation between sexes and between adults and minors.
 - b. All overnight events require all adults 18 and older to be Essential 3 qualified.
- 2.10 Communications by volunteers with unrelated minors or vulnerable adults must be for volunteer ministry-related reasons only. Volunteers must maintain appropriate boundaries in all communications with an unrelated minor or vulnerable adult, including communications through the use of electronic devices or web-based media.
- Volunteers should only communicate to minors or vulnerable adults in a group message or public forum. Any private, one-to-one communication initiated by a minor or vulnerable adult to a volunteer must be shared with the parent/guardian as well as the volunteer's supervisor.
- 2.11 Volunteers will not use physical force or use profane, demeaning, or abusive language in interactions with a minor or vulnerable adult; however, proportional physical force may be used in emergency situations for self-defense or if the minor or vulnerable adult is a danger to self or others.
- 2.12 Volunteers are prohibited from providing or receiving expensive or excessive gifts from an unrelated minor or vulnerable adult without the permission of a parent, guardian, or close family member. Exchanges of modest, appropriate gifts between groups of minors, volunteers, or staff in the ordinary course of archdiocesan, parish, or school settings are permissible.

3. Reporting Misconduct

- 3.1 Volunteers must report illegal or unethical behavior to their supervisor or other appropriate church authority.
- 3.2 Volunteers must self-report to their supervisor as promptly as possible if they are arrested or charged with a crime.
- 3.3 Volunteers who have reason to believe that a minor or vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected or has been abused or neglected must immediately (within 24 hours) report the basis for their belief to:
- a. Proper civil authorities (See "How to Report Suspected Child Abuse" pamphlet at www.SafeCatholicSPM.org); and
 - b. Your supervisor. If the abuse may involve your supervisor, contact the Director of Ministerial Standards and Safe Environment (651-291-4400).



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Acknowledgement and Consent

I am a volunteer serving within the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. I have read this *Code of Conduct for Adult Volunteers Who Interact with Minors and Vulnerable Adults (Code)* and I agree to abide by it.

I further understand and agree that I am subject to periodic Background Checks, and am required to participate in periodic Archdiocesan Safe Environment trainings commensurate with my role. I also understand that I may face consequences or discipline, up to and including removal from service and/or termination of my volunteer role, for violations of this *Code*.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

Volunteer Position and Location of Service