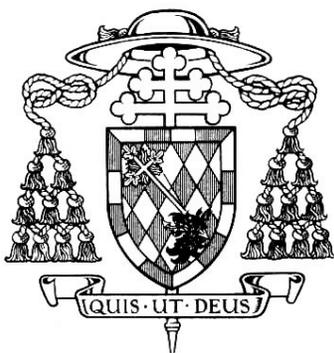


Strengthening the Caring Community



Guidelines for Parish Volunteers

Through the Sacrament of Baptism, we are called to share our gifts with one another and with the world. Given the importance of this call from God, it is essential that we, as a community, do all we can to assure that the right gifts are shared in the right way, at the right time, by the right people. We fulfill our mission more effectively when we make every effort to ensure a richer, stronger, more vibrant and safer community of faith.

Strengthening the Caring Community is simply a process designed to create and maintain a safe environment in our parishes. This process involves identifying any volunteer ministry position, which could put children, youth or other vulnerable persons at risk of being harmed. The goal at all times is the protection and safety of our vulnerable people, our volunteers, our paid staff, and our Church. Thus, it is a permanent policy of the Archdiocese of Toronto to screen all parish volunteer ministry positions.

Every organization has a responsibility, which is at once moral, spiritual and legal. Strengthening the Caring Community is not only the right thing to do but it is legally required under the concept of "Duty of Care". Duty of Care is a legal principle that identifies the obligations of individuals and organizations to take reasonable measures to care for and protect those who participate in their programs.

Strengthening the Caring Community

- Guidelines When Working With Children - - General Guidelines for Volunteers -

The following guidelines are intended to provide a general overview of how interaction should occur. It is recognized that unforeseen circumstances can and will occur. The important safeguard for both our vulnerable participant and us is full disclosure. If an adult finds him or herself alone with a vulnerable participant/child for any significant amount of time, or in a situation of emotional intensity, every effort should be made to find another adult or inform the ministry leader or the child's parent/guardian as quickly as possible under the circumstances.

- Volunteers over 16 years of age should not spend extended time alone with children without consent of the child's guardian and the knowledge of the ministry leader/supervisor.
- When programming requires an adult to be alone with children (overnight camps for example) every effort must be made to protect the child's privacy. Girls and boys must not change together and adults must change separately from the children. Adults should not sleep in proximity to children.
- Adults who form a relationship with children through Church activities should not seek out opportunities to spend time with the child "off site". If off site interactions occur the Ministry Coordinator/Leader should be informed.
- Adults should not help children with toileting. For younger children who cannot manage alone, parent/guardian permission must be given before toileting or changing help is permitted.
- Children should not be taken in an adult's vehicle without parent/guardian permission and the knowledge of the Ministry Coordinator/Leader.
- Physical contact between adults and children should occur in "public" and be sanctioned by the Ministry Coordinator/Leader and the parent/guardian. For example hugs and kisses for younger children or physical 'rough housing' with older kids.
- Parents/guardians of children enrolled in programs should be encouraged to ask questions and stay abreast of the nature of the adult/child interaction. Where they feel comfortable they should be encouraged to talk with their children about the programs and the volunteers and staff they encounter.
- Volunteers should not spend extended time alone with vulnerable participants without consent and knowledge of the Ministry Coordinator/Leader.
- When and if, programming requires a volunteer to be alone with a vulnerable participant every effort must be made to protect the person's privacy.
- Volunteers should not take others in their vehicle without letting the Ministry Coordinator/Leader know.
- Physical contact between adults should occur in "public" and be sanctioned by the Ministry.
- Volunteers should not take any money or property from a participant for their volunteer ministry.
- Volunteers must not act outside the set boundaries of the Ministry Position Description.

These guidelines are not intended to hamper relationships between volunteers and participants or between adults and children. More importantly they are not designed to introduce suspicion. In all cases with children, a certain amount of discretion rests with the adult, based on their knowledge and the nature of the relationship, the setting and the activities. Being open or "transparent" when a relationship becomes closer or more time is spent alone, reviewing any incidents with 'supervisors' – these steps will ensure the safety of our vulnerable, the integrity of our programs and the well being of our volunteers.

Strengthening the Caring Community

- Volunteer Conduct -

Conduct

To ensure the highest standard of health and safety for all volunteers, participants, staff, clergy, parishioners and the whole parish community and to provide for the efficient and effective operation of the parish, all Volunteers must maintain the highest traditions of service.

Specifically, all Volunteers are required:

1. To attend as scheduled and to be punctual; to absent themselves only for good and sufficient reason, and to notify the necessary person of anticipated absences;
2. To perform duties and to discharge responsibilities safely, effectively, and with proper regard for time and material;
3. To be courteous and cooperative in their relations with other Volunteers and with the parish community;
4. To conduct themselves, both on and off the job, in a manner that reflects credit to their Parish; to dress appropriately; and
5. To demonstrate an awareness of, and respect for sexual, cultural and physical differences in their relationships with participants, other Volunteers and the whole parish community.

The pastor is responsible for creating and maintaining an environment that fosters mutual respect among individuals. This includes ensuring Volunteers are not subject to retaliation as a result of making a complaint or participating in an investigation of a complaint.

Public Use of the Parish Name

Without the specific authority of the Pastor or his delegate, Parish Volunteers should never make any public pronouncements on potentially contentious theological or moral issues in the name of the Parish or which might be constructed as having been made with the authority of the Parish.

It is recognized that volunteers are also private citizens and as such have the freedom as individuals to speak out on matters of public concern; however, in so doing they should make it very clear that they are speaking as private citizens and not with the authority of the Parish.

Prohibited Items on Parish Property

Under no circumstances are the following items permitted on parish property, including parking areas: all types of firearms; switchblade knives and knives with a blade longer than five inches; dangerous chemicals; explosives including blasting caps; chains and other objects carried for the purpose of injuring or intimidating.

Harassment

“Harassment means engaging in a course of vexatious comments or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome”

[Ontario Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter H.19, section 10. (1)].

No volunteer shall be allowed to harass any other or any member of the general public by exhibiting behavior including, but not limited to, the following:

- *Verbal Harassment* - Verbal threats toward persons or property; the use of vulgar or profane language toward others; disparaging or derogatory comments or slurs; offensive sexual flirtations and propositions; verbal intimidation; exaggerated criticism and name-calling.
- *Visual Harassment* - Derogatory or offensive posters, cartoons, publications, pictures or drawings.
- *Physical Harassment* - Any physical assault, such as hitting, pushing, kicking, holding, impeding or blocking the movement of another person.

Any Volunteer who feels they have been subjected to harassment of any kind (including sexual harassment) should:

- Make their disapproval known to the person whose behaviour is in question
- Keep a written record of the date(s), time(s), the unacceptable behaviour(s), any witnesses to the incident(s) to whomever they feel comfortable talking to (the Pastor, Associate Pastor, member of the Finance Council, etc.).
- The individual contacted will provide counsel to the Volunteer (if comfortable in doing so) and request that she/he provide written documentation of the incident(s) so that an investigation may be made.
- The person who has received the initial contact from the Volunteer should promptly inform the Catholic Pastoral Centre; Human Resources Department who will in turn make the appropriate contacts.

All Parish Volunteers in the Archdiocese of Toronto are expected to adhere to this Guideline for Volunteer Conduct.

Statement of Intention

1. TO SAFEGUARD, IN ALL RESPECTS, ALL OF *THOSE TO WHOM WE MINISTER.*
2. TO SUPPORT *PARISH VOLUNTEERS* AND PRESERVE THEIR SAFETY, INTEGRITY AND REPUTATION.
3. TO ENSURE THAT WE FULFILL OUR DUTY AND OBLIGATIONS AS A *FAITH COMMUNITY*