



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 5:16).¹

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,²
- 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 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 The provisions of the Code apply to all Church Personnel regardless of individual religious beliefs or affiliation. For non-Catholics, this introductory section reminds them of the mission of the organization they have chosen to serve and are called to support through their service. It does not imply a personal assent to all Catholic Church doctrine, but rather a commitment to conduct themselves in their role with the Catholic Church in a way that is consistent with Church teachings so as not to give a public witness counter to the faith and teaching of the organization they are serving. Therefore, Catholics and non-catholics alike, who are serving the Church in an official capacity, are expected to comply with the provisions of this code which is based on our teaching about the dignity of the human person and the witness we are called to give as a Church.

² *Ibid* [1.]

“Parish” means a parish within the Archdiocese Territory that is Archdiocese-recognized as Catholic.

“School” means a primary school or a secondary school within the Archdiocese Territory that is Archdiocese-recognized as Catholic.

“Seminary” or Seminaries” means the St. Paul Seminary, St. John Vianney Seminary, or both.

“Unprofessional” means below or contrary to the standards expected in a particular profession.

“Vulnerable Adult” means persons with physical, mental or emotional conditions that render them unable to defend or protect themselves, or get help when at risk of harm.

2. Conduct with Minors

- 2.1 Volunteers must use prudent judgment and common sense when working with minors.
- 2.2 Volunteers should be aware of their own vulnerability and the vulnerability of others when working with minors. 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.⁴
- 2.4 Volunteers who minister to the home-bound and to minors are encouraged to serve in the company of another safe environment trained adult whenever possible.
- 2.5 Physical contact with unrelated minors must be public, appropriate, and nonsexual. Some examples of permissible physical contact include:
 - a. Brief side hugs or an arm around the shoulder.
 - b. Brief pat on the should /upper back.
 - c. Hand-shakes or “high fives”
 - d. Holding hands during prayer.
 - e. Holding hands while walking with young children and those unsteady.
 - f. Brief touching of hand, head shoulder or arm.

⁴ See Settlement Agreement, section 3.3, dated December 12, 2015 between the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and Ramsey County Attorney. Ramsey County District Court File No.: 62-JV-15-1674; County Attorney File No.: 2138749.

Some examples of non-permissible physical contact include:

- a. Tickling,
- b. Massages,
- c. Prolonged hugs from the front or rear,
- d. Touching of breasts or genitals.

- 2.6 Volunteers must not possess or use alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs when interacting with unrelated minors, nor provide these items to a minor. Volunteers should take great care to avoid use of medications that impair functioning or good judgment when volunteering with minors.
- 2.7 Volunteers must not acquire, possess or distribute any pornographic or sexually explicit, profane, or otherwise inappropriate materials, by any means or technology. Volunteers are prohibited from viewing pornographic materials on, or taking pornographic materials onto, the property of the Archdiocese, a Parish or a School.⁵ Suspected child pornography must be referred to law enforcement immediately.
- 2.8 Volunteers are prohibited from showing pornographic material to minors and illegally providing alcohol, tobacco or drugs to minors.⁶
- 2.9 Volunteers must not travel in a vehicle with an unrelated minor 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.
- 2.10 Volunteers must not share private space or overnight accommodations (bedroom, hotel room, tent, camper, bed, etc.) with any unrelated minor.
 - 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.

⁵ See Settlement Agreement, section 5.8, dated December 12, 2015 between the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and Ramsey County Attorney. Ramsey County District Court File No.: 62-JV-15-1674; County Attorney File No.: 2138749.

⁶ See Settlement Agreement, section 5.9, dated December 12, 2015 between the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and Ramsey County Attorney. Ramsey County District Court File No.: 62-JV-15-1674; County Attorney File No.: 2138749.

- 2.11 Communications by volunteers with unrelated minors must be for volunteer ministry-related reasons only. Volunteers must maintain appropriate boundaries in all communications with an unrelated minor, 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.
- 2.12 Volunteers will not use physical force or use profane, demeaning, or abusive language in interactions with a minor; however, proportional physical force may be used in emergency situations for self-defense or if the minor is a danger to self or others.
- 2.13 Volunteers are prohibited from providing or receiving expensive or excessive gifts from an unrelated minor 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, unethical or unprofessional behavior to their supervisor or other appropriate church authority.⁷
- 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 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).

⁷ See Settlement Agreement, section 5.11, dated December 12, 2015 between the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and Ramsey County Attorney. Ramsey County District Court File No.: 62-JV-15-1674; County Attorney File No.: 2138749.