



Code of Pastoral Conduct

For Volunteers Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

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Preface

This *Code of Pastoral Conduct for Volunteers* is intended for use as a risk management tool by bishops, pastors, superiors of religious communities/institutes, and administrators. The purpose of the *Code of Pastoral Conduct for Volunteers* is to assist in developing and implementing uniform guidelines for appropriate behavior. This *Code of Pastoral Conduct* is not intended to address all situations that may arise in volunteer ministry. It is intended to create a structure for addressing a variety of circumstances that, if not appropriately addressed, may create a risk of incidents, allegations, claims and/or lawsuits.

The Church must be exemplary. Volunteers in our parishes and schools should and will be held accountable for their behavior. In order to maintain the highest level of accountability, there must be a clear and unambiguous blueprint of appropriate and inappropriate behavior. The *Code of Pastoral Conduct for Volunteers* provides a basic structure for identifying limits. It is intended as a “continuous improvement document.” Therefore, your suggestions and recommendations for additions and revisions are encouraged.

The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings has modeled this *Code of Pastoral Conduct* on the VIRTUS[®] sample, and is now implemented in adherence to and in strict compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Revised Edition*¹ (*Charter*) and *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests, Deacons, or other Church Personnel*² (*Norms*). The *Charter* and *Norms* are available on the Internet at <http://www.usccb.org/ocyp/charter.pdf>

¹ The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Revised Edition*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C., November 2002.

² The *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Congregation for Bishops, Washington, D.C., December 8, 2002. Note: The *Norms* were officially promulgated as particular law of the United States on December 12, 2002.



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I. Preamble

Priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, administrators, staff, and volunteers in our parishes, religious communities/institutes, and organizations must uphold Christian values and conduct. The *Code of Pastoral Conduct for Volunteers* provides a set of standards for conduct in certain pastoral situations.

II. Responsibility

The public and private conduct of volunteers can inspire and motivate people, but it can also scandalize and undermine the people's faith. Church and school volunteers must, at all times, be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their ministry. They must also know that God's goodness and grace supports them in their ministry.

Responsibility for adherence to the *Code of Pastoral Conduct* rests with the individual. Volunteers who disregard this *Code of Pastoral Conduct* will be subject to remedial action by the Diocese. Corrective action may take various forms—from a verbal correction to removal from the ministry—depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm.



III. Standards for Volunteers

a. Conduct with Youth

Volunteers working with youth shall maintain an open and trustworthy relationship between youth and adult supervisors.

- 1.1 Volunteers must be aware of their own and others' vulnerability when working alone with youth. Use a team approach to managing youth activities.
- 1.2 Physical contact with youth can be misconstrued and should occur (a) only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and (b) never in private.
- 1.3 Volunteers should refrain from (a) the illegal possession and/or illegal use of drugs and/or alcohol at all times, and (b) the use of alcohol when working with minors.
- 1.4 Volunteers should not provide shared, private, overnight accommodation for individual young people including, but not limited to, accommodations in any Church-owned facility, private residence, hotel room, or any other place where there is no other adult supervision present.
 - 1.4.1 In rare, emergency situations, when accommodation is necessary for the health and well-being of the youth, the volunteer should take extraordinary care to protect all parties from the appearance of impropriety and from all risk of harm.
 - 1.4.2 Use a team approach to managing emergency situations.
 - 1.4.3 Two or more adults must be present for events involving minors in high-risk settings. The recommended ratio for chaperones/supervisors is 1:6.
 - 1.4.4 Facilities must be monitored during all organization activities.
 - 1.4.5 Children requiring transportation or escort may be released only to a parent, guardian or other person who has been authorized in writing to take custody of the minor(s).
 - 1.4.6 Parental approval must be obtained before permitting children to participate in athletic events or any other activity that involves potential risk.



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- 1.4.7 Dress must always be modest.
- 1.4.8 Only qualified adult drivers may transport minors. Appropriate permission must be received and all proper insurance forms must be completed and approved by the authority of the organization. Forms and procedures are obtained from the insurance provider for the Diocese. (visit the diocesan website for forms, www.dioceseofgfb.org)
- 1.4.9 Parental permission must be obtained, including a signed medical treatment form, before taking minors on trips. Medication of any kind may not be administered without written parental permission.
- 1.4.10 Adult participants are required to abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages for the duration of the event, as well as during their travels to and from events.
- 1.4.11 Both adults and minor are expected to attend all activities with the entire group.
- 1.4.12 During all activities, especially a dance or other social event, chaperones shall remain and be available in the premises where the activity takes place.
- 1.4.13 On any trip, information will be distributed to chaperones /supervisors for review with all participants to help familiarize them with the program schedule and layout of the facilities where event activities will take place.
- 1.4.14 A specific location must be designated where minors will be able to locate their chaperone/supervisor or where the group will meet at an agreed-upon time.
- 1.4.15 During overnight activities, chaperones/supervisors are responsible for establishing curfew and for enforcing it.
- 1.4.16 Chaperones/supervisors must check rooms after curfew to make sure that minors are in their rooms and remain there; sleeping rooms may not be shared with one minor and one adult.
- 1.4.17 Clergy should not allow minors to stay overnight in the clerics accommodations or residence, except for relatives with parental permission.



b. Sexual Conduct

Volunteers must not, for sexual gain or intimacy, exploit the trust placed in them by the faith community.

- 2.1 Volunteers who are committed to a celibate lifestyle are called to be an example of celibate chastity in all relationships at all times.
- 2.2 Volunteers who provide pastoral counseling or spiritual direction services must avoid developing inappropriately intimate relationships with minors, other staff, or parishioners. Volunteers must behave in a professional manner at all times.
- 2.3 No volunteer may exploit another person for sexual purposes.
- 2.4 Allegations of sexual misconduct should be taken seriously and reported to the Vicar General or the Victim Assistance Coordinator, and to civil authorities if the situation involves a minor. The Diocesan procedures will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.
- 2.5 Volunteers should review and know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the state of Montana and will follow those mandates, including but not limited to the following from the Montana Code Annotated.

MT

Agency: Department of Public Health and Human Services

Website: <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/cfsd/>

State Statutes: http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/mca_toc/index.htm

Statute Citation: Mont. Code Ann. § 41-3-201

Statute Link: [Statute Link](#)

Procedure: Contact department

Hotline: 1-866-820-5437

c. Harassment

Volunteers must not engage in physical, psychological, written, or verbal harassment of staff, volunteers, or parishioners and must not tolerate such harassment by other Church staff or volunteers.

- 3.1 Volunteers shall provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment.



3.2 Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, written, or verbal behavior, including without limitation the following:

- a) Physical or mental abuse.
- b) Racial insults.
- c) Derogatory ethnic slurs.
- d) Unwelcome sexual advances or touching.
- e) Sexual comments or sexual jokes.
- f) Requests for sexual favors used as:
 - a condition of employment, or
 - to affect other personnel decisions, such as promotion or compensation.
- g) Display of offensive materials.

3.3 Harassment can be a single severe incident or a persistent pattern of behavior where the purpose or the effect is to create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating work environment.

3.4 Allegations of harassment will be taken seriously and reported immediately to the Vicar General or, in cases involving sexual abuse of a minor, the VAC. Diocesan procedures will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.

d. Conflicts of Interest

Volunteers should avoid situations that might present a conflict of interest. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call integrity and professional conduct into question.

4.1 Volunteers should disclose all relevant factors that potentially could create a conflict of interest. No volunteer should take advantage of anyone to whom they are providing services in order to further their personal, religious, political or business interests.

4.2 Volunteers should inform all parties when a real or potential conflict of interest arises. Resolution of the issues must protect the person receiving ministry services.

4.2.1 No volunteer should take advantage of anyone to whom they are providing services in order to further their personal, religious, political or business interests.



e. Reporting Ethical or Professional Misconduct

Volunteers have a duty to report their own ethical or professional misconduct and the misconduct of others.

- a. Volunteers must hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. When there is an indication of illegal actions by volunteers, you should notify the proper civil authorities immediately. Also notify the Vicar General.
- b. When an uncertainty exists about whether a situation or course of conduct violates this *Code of Conduct* or other religious, moral, or ethical principles, consult with:
 - Peers,
 - Others knowledgeable about ethical issues, or
 - The Vicar General.
- c. When it appears that a volunteer has violated this *Code of Conduct* or other religious, moral, or ethical principles:
 - Report the issue to a supervisor or next higher authority, or
 - Refer the matter directly to the Vicar General.
- d. Pornography
 - Accessing and viewing pornography or adult-only Web sites is morally reprehensible, and accessing it using diocesan property is strictly forbidden under all circumstances using parish or diocesan equipment.
 - All volunteers are obliged to report evidence of inappropriate behavior to the supervisor if it involves child pornography; the supervisor will cooperate with the Vicar General in notifying the civil authorities.
 - If there is evidence that a cleric is involved in accessing and viewing child pornography, the Bishop should be notified immediately, who will in turn notify the civil authorities and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

f. Administration

Volunteers shall treat employers, supervisors, clergy, and staff justly in the day-to-day administrative operations of their ministries.



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- a. Personnel and other administrative decisions made by volunteers shall meet civil and canon law obligations and also reflect Catholic social teachings and this *Code of Conduct*.
- b. No volunteer shall use his or her position to exercise unreasonable or inappropriate power and authority.
- c. Each volunteer providing service's to children and youth must read and sign the *Code of Conduct for Volunteers* before providing services.

g. Volunteer Well-being

Volunteers have the duty to be responsible for their own spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional health.

- a. Volunteers should be aware of warning signs that indicate potential problems with their own spiritual, physical, mental, and/or emotional health.
- b. Volunteers should seek help immediately whenever they notice behavioral or emotional warning signs in their own professional and/or personal lives.
- c. Volunteers must address their own spiritual needs. Support from a Spiritual Director is highly recommended.

IV. Contacting the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

To request information from the diocese on the Code of Pastoral Conduct, contact:

Rev. Jay H. Peterson, V.G.

Catholic Pastoral Center
P O Box 1399
Great Falls, MT 59403-1399
1-800-332-9998 toll-free
1-406-727-6683

Or

Sister Kathleen Kane, OP, Victim Assistance Coordinator, 406-378-2369



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V. Statement of Acceptance: Volunteer’s Code of Conduct

Our children are the most important gifts God has entrusted to us. As a volunteer, I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this *Code of Conduct for Volunteers* as a condition of my providing services to the children and youth of our Diocese.

As a volunteer, I will:

- Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with children and/or youth at Church activities.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition, or comparison when working with children and/or youth.
- Refuse to accept expensive gifts from children and/or youth or their parents without prior written approval from the pastor or administrator.
- Refrain from giving expensive gifts to children and/or youth without prior written approval from the parents or guardian and the pastor or administrator.
- Report suspected abuse to the pastor, administrator, or appropriate supervisor and the local Child Protection Services agency. I understand that failure to report suspected abuse to civil authorities is, according to the law, a misdemeanor.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children and/or youth.

I will not:

- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children and/or youth.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while volunteering.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Strike, spank, shake, or slap children and/or youth.
- Touch a child and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use profanity in the presence of children and/or youth.

I understand that as a volunteer diocesan representative working with children and/or youth, I am subject to a thorough background check including criminal history. I understand that any action inconsistent with this *Code of Conduct* or failure to take action mandated by this *Code of Conduct* may result in my removal as a volunteer with children and/or youth.

Printed Name

Parish/School and Town

Signature

Date

**This page is to be copied, signed and sent to the Chancery
(PO Box 1399, Great Falls, MT, 59403-1399)**