



Archdiocese  
of Toronto

**ARCHDIOCESE OF TORONTO**

General Risk Ministries

Strengthening the Caring Community  
**Guidelines & Policy Information**

Archdiocese of Toronto ▪ 1155 Yonge Street, Toronto, ON

For more information, please contact:

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# Strengthening the Caring Community Guidelines for Parish Volunteers

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## **All Volunteers in the Archdiocese of Toronto are expected to adhere to the Guidelines for Volunteer Conduct.**

### **Statement of Intention**

1. To safeguard, in all respects, all of those to whom we minister.
2. To support the parishes, staff and volunteers, and preserve their safety, integrity and reputation.
3. To ensure that we fulfill our duty and obligations as a faith community.

### **Guidelines for 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**

Volunteer Screening Program is a process designed to create and maintain a safe environment within all parishes as well as the offices and departments within the Archdiocese of Toronto. 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 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.

### **Overview of General Guidelines for Volunteers**

1 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

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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.

### **General Guidelines:**

- 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.

### **Public Use of the Parish /Archdiocese of Toronto's Name**

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

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/ or the Archdiocese of Toronto.

### **Prohibited Items on Property**

Under no circumstances are the following items permitted on parish property/the Archdiocese of Toronto's 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.

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### **Volunteer 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 Office of Clergy Personnel, all Volunteers must maintain the highest traditions of service.

### **Safe Environment**

The pastor/Director 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.

### **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/ and or department in which they support; to dress appropriately as per parish guidelines; 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.

### **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)].

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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:

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- **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.

### Reporting Harassment

The Archdiocese of Toronto will promptly investigate any allegation of harassment, and if it is determined that harassment has occurred, appropriate action will be taken. All allegations will be investigated in a confidential and professional manner.

**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 behavior(s), any witnesses to the incident(s) to whomever they feel comfortable talking to (the Pastor, Associate Pastor, the Human Resources Department of the Archdiocese of Toronto, etc.).
- The individual contacted may provide support to the Volunteer (if comfortable in doing so) and refer the volunteer to the Human Resources Department of the Archdiocese of Toronto so that an investigation can be made.

**The person who has received the initial contact from the Volunteer should promptly report the matter confidentially to the Human Resources Department of the Archdiocese of Toronto.**

### Guidelines When Working with Children:

- 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.
- Children should not be taken in an adult's vehicle without parent/guardian permission and the knowledge of the Ministry Coordinator/Leader.

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- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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, a certain amount of discretion rests with the volunteer, 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

### **Reporting Protocol: Abuse/Inappropriate Conduct**

In the case of the discovery of abuse by or against a volunteer, employee, or any other person, the person who has uncovered this information has the responsibility to report it in the following manner:

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**In the case of a Child under 16 years of age there are two (2) steps:**

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### **Step 1:**

Contact the local Children's Aid Society (CAS) (or Catholic CAS) to report any suspicion of abuse; refer to outlined in legislation under the Child & Family Services Act.\*

This means that if a person suspects abuse, they must report this to the Children's Aid Society personally, they are not to pass the information to the Pastor expecting that he will report.

### **Legislation: Child & Family Services Act**

*\* Legislation states that if a person, including a person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children, has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection on the grounds outlined in this section of the Act, shall forthwith report the suspicion and the information on which it is based directly to the Children's Aid Society and not rely on any other person to report on her/his behalf. {Child & Family Service Act, s.72 (1)}.*

*A person who makes a report about a child to the Children's Aid Society in accordance with this section is protected from legal action, unless the report was made maliciously or without reasonable grounds for the suspicion. {Child & Family Service Act, s.72 (7)}.*

### **Step 2:**

Contact the Pastor to update him on the situation. The Pastor will notify the volunteer in question and remove them from their ministry until further notice. The Pastor will then notify the Director of Human Resources at the Catholic Pastoral Centre.

### **In the case of a person, 16 years of age and older:**

Contact the local police services to report the suspicion. Ensure that the Pastor/ or Director has been notified of the situation. He will in turn notify the Director of Human Resources at the Catholic Pastoral Centre. Please note that no other persons aside from the local authorities may form investigation of the suspicion.

### **Documentation of Suspected Abuse/Inappropriate Conduct:**

Document all statements, conversations and observations as soon as possible. Keep these documents strictly confidential and only pass them on to the Pastor.

### **Report to include:**

Dates, Times, Name of Persons Involved, Locations, a clear and complete Summary of Incident, Situation or Warning Signs.

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## AGREEMENT STATEMENT

I, \_\_\_\_\_ verify

That I have read and understood all conditions under the Strengthening the Caring Community, Guidelines for Parish Volunteers. I agree to abide by these policies and guidelines and also understand that the Archdiocese of Toronto may change this policy at its discretion without notice.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please sign and return to Parish Volunteer Screening Committee.**

**This document should be kept in volunteer file at the parish office.**