



Archdiocese  
*of* Toronto

# Volunteer Guidelines & Code of Conduct

October 2025

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May, 2023

Dear Volunteers,

Volunteers across the Archdiocese of Toronto have a long-standing tradition of giving generously of their time and talents to strengthen our community. We must never underestimate the tremendous contribution of these individuals and the critical role they play in providing care, compassion, and ongoing support to our family of faith.

As part of our mandate to foster a safe and caring community, since 2000 the Archdiocese of Toronto has had a policy of screening its volunteers to ensure the protection and safety of the most vulnerable.

Our diocesan Volunteer Screening Program oversees this important work conducting the appropriate checks and balances to ensure a safe environment for all those engaged in a variety of important ministries. The pages of the Volunteer Guidelines and Code of Conduct will provide additional insight and helpful information for those engaged in volunteer services to the community.

I wish to thank those responsible for coordinating these activities at both the diocesan and parish level. To all volunteers who are following the gospel call to serve, be assured of my prayers and ongoing gratitude. May your outreach with the Archdiocese of Toronto enhance your own faith journey.

If you have any questions regarding this document or its contents, please contact the Volunteer Screening Program Advisor at 437-524-8542.

Yours sincerely in Jesus with Mary,

His Eminence Frank Cardinal Leo  
Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto

His Eminence, Frank Cardinal Leo, Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto | 1155 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario M4T 1W2

## 1. Background

### 1.1 Overview

The following guidelines are intended to provide a general overview of how volunteers should interact with participants and parishioners through the course of their ministry work. It is recognized that unforeseen circumstances can and will occur. These guidelines are meant to provide tools to ensure the safety of the volunteers, parishioners and vulnerable participants of the Archdiocese of Toronto.

### 1.2 Statement of Intention

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 fulfil our mission more effectively when we make every effort to ensure a richer, stronger, more vibrant and safer community of faith. These guidelines are intended:

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 fulfil our Duty of Care and obligation as a faith community.

### 1.3 Safe Environment Policy

The Archdiocese of Toronto has implemented a series of policies and procedures to foster a safe environment for all those who interact with the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Toronto. Those we serve include young people, adults and seniors who all make up the body of Christ among us.

The Pastor or 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.

**Click to View:** [Safe Environment Policy](#)

### 1.4 Strengthening the Caring Community

The Volunteer Screening Program is designed to create and maintain a safe environment within all parishes as well as the offices and departments within the Archdiocese of Toronto. It involves identifying any volunteer ministry positions that 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 staff, and our Church. The Archdiocese of Toronto considers the policy of screening of all volunteers a moral, spiritual, and legal responsibility. Strengthening the Caring Community is the right thing to do, as well as legally required under Duty of Care; the 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.

## 2. Volunteer Conduct

### 2.1 Use of Parish name and Archdiocese of Toronto's name

Without the specific authority of the Pastor, his delegate or the Ministry Leader, 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 construed 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.

### 2.2 Expectations of Volunteers

Volunteers are expected to adhere to all policies outlined in this document when representing the Archdiocese of Toronto. They make a commitment to the parishes and departments within the Archdiocese of Toronto and are accountable to the organization.

Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful manner throughout their ministry, to ensure the highest standard of health, safety and respect for fellow volunteers, participants, staff, clergy, parishioners, and the entire parish community.

#### **All Volunteers are required to:**

- Participate in the volunteer screening process before assuming any volunteer responsibilities.
- Attend scheduled volunteering commitments and be punctual. Volunteers are expected to make every effort to keep volunteer commitments; in the event that absence is required, volunteers will notify the necessary person(s) in a timely manner.
- Perform duties and discharge responsibilities safely, effectively, and with proper regard for time and material.
- Be courteous and cooperative in their relations with other volunteers and with the parish community.
- Conduct themselves in a manner that reflects credit to their parish or department, both during ministry work and in everyday activities.
- Dress appropriately as per parish guidelines.

- Demonstrate an awareness of, and respect for sex, cultural and physical differences.
- Refrain from driving others to parish events in their vehicle without the prior knowledge of the Pastor, Ministry Coordinator or Ministry Leader.
- Ensure that any physical contact with others is of an appropriate nature (See Sections 4 and 5).
- Maintain boundaries set out in the Ministry Position Description, when volunteering.
- Refrain from accepting any money or gifts from any parish program participant.
- Not remove any parish property without the express consent of the Pastor.

### 3. Non-discrimination

#### 3.1 Overview

It is the Policy of the Archdiocese of Toronto and all its Parishes not to discriminate against any volunteer or prospective volunteer pursuant to the provisions of the Ontario Human Rights Code and elements of the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement.

The Ontario Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination based on the following:

- Age, ancestry, colour, race, citizenship, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, disability, family status, marital status, gender identity, gender expression, record of offences, sex, sexual orientation.

The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement is designed to be inclusive and may be adapted to apply to a diversity of people, cultures, communities, opportunities, and approaches, where non-profit organizations may commit to not only strengthening their volunteer engagement strategy but also to strengthening the capacity of the organization to meet its mandate and contribute to a stronger community.

The Archdiocese supports the intent of both Codes. It is our policy to protect volunteers from discrimination and harassment on our premises and to take the necessary steps in order to put an end to any unacceptable conduct.

#### 3.2 Volunteer Rights & Responsibilities

All volunteers have the right to work in an environment free from discrimination and harassment and have a responsibility to help create and maintain such an environment.

#### **Volunteers are expected to:**

- Treat all individuals with respect regardless of their personal characteristics.
- Be in full compliance with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Archdiocese policies on general and sexual harassment (See Section 4).
- Comply with all health and safety practices in accordance with the [Archdiocese of Toronto Health and Safety Policy](#).

## 4. Violence, Harassment and Prohibited Items on Property

### 4.1 Harassment, violence, and unacceptable behaviour

This is defined as any interaction between individuals that can be characterized as unwelcome, intimidation, or misconduct. The Archdiocese of Toronto rejects and disapproves of all acts of harassment in any parish activities including discrimination of any kind, which may include vexatious comments, sexual harassment and other actions that are known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome.

#### **Violence:**

Aggressive physical behaviour and threatening comments on parish property or away from parish property if the volunteer work relates to parish activities.

#### **Unacceptable behaviour:**

Physically or psychologically aggressive behaviours, including but not limited to:

- Any threat of violence;
- Verbal abuse of any kind;
- Unwelcome sexual advances;
- Hitting, kicking, punching, shoving, slapping, grabbing or biting;
- Carrying or brandishing weapons of any sort;
- Throwing objects at an individual with a view of causing physical injury or fear;
- Intimidating behaviour that causes the recipient to have a fear of physical violence and bullying.

**Click to View:** [Violence Prevention Policy](#) and [Harassment Prevention Policy](#)

#### **Prohibited Item(s) on Property:**

Under no circumstances are the following items permitted on parish property or the Archdiocese of Toronto's property, including parking areas and events held at other venues (i.e. banquet halls, schools, and any other facilities where parish functions are held.):

- All types of firearms, any knife or sharp object of any length, dangerous chemicals, explosives including blasting caps;
- Chains and other objects carried for the purpose of injury or intimidation;
- Distribution or sale of any non-medicinal drugs or barbiturates, including cannabis;
- Alcoholic beverages; unless a licence is purchased to serve at an event ([See Fit for Duty Policy, Appendix C](#)).

Please note that this list is not exhaustive.

## 4.2 Incidents

### **Minor Incident(s):**

Incidents that did not result in actual physical harm, but except for circumstance, had the potential to result in physical harm.

### **Serious incident(s):**

An incident in which someone is harmed physically or emotionally, whether requiring medical attention or not. A [Workplace Violence Prevention Policy](#) exists, which includes measures and procedures to protect volunteers from workplace violence, a means of summoning immediate assistance and a process for volunteers to report incidents or raise concerns.

Complainants are encouraged to file a complaint immediately after an alleged incident of harassment or violence.

**Click to View:** [Violent Incident Reporting Form](#)

## 5. Harassment and Violence Prevention Policy

The Archdiocese of Toronto is committed to building and preserving a safe working environment for its volunteers. In pursuit of this goal, the Archdiocese of Toronto does not condone and will not tolerate acts of harassment or violence against or by any volunteers.

This policy prohibits physical and verbal threats, harassment of any kind, intimidation or acts of violence in the workplace. It establishes procedures to both minimize and/or prevent violence and other unacceptable behavior in the workplace and to foster the safety and security of all parish volunteers.

### 5.2 Pastors' Responsibilities

#### **Pastors are responsible for:**

- Assessing the risk of violence to volunteers in the workplace, minimizing those risks where necessary or reasonably possible, and informing any affected volunteer of such risk or potential risk.
- Tracking and reporting risks of violence, incidents of violence, and close calls to the Director of Human Resources of the Archdiocese of Toronto.
- Ensuring proper medical care is provided for anyone involved in an incident and for securing the safety of volunteers and all participants before investigating the incident or taking reports.
- Cooperating with police, investigators or other authorities as required during an investigation related to workplace violence.

### 5.3 Volunteers' Responsibilities

#### **Volunteers are responsible for:**

- Informing their Pastor of any violence, potential risk of violence, harassment, or unacceptable behavior that they may experience or witness.
- Reporting to their Pastor any incidents of violence or situations that may be of concern according to the procedures set out in this policy.
- Cooperating with the police, investigators or other authorities as required during an investigation related to workplace violence or harassment.

### 5.4 Overview of Complaints and Investigations Process

Complaint procedures are applicable to all Archdiocesan workplaces and locations where parish-related activities are held outside of parish property. Complainants are encouraged to file a complaint immediately after an alleged incident of harassment or violence.

Any volunteer who feels they have been subjected to harassment of any kind including sexual harassment are encouraged to make their disapproval known to the person whose behaviour is in question if able to do so.

**Click to View:** [Complaints and Investigations Instructions, Appendix B](#)

## 6. Safe Guidelines: where Children and Youth are involved

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 based on the nature of the relationship, the setting, and the activities.

We encourage being open or transparent when a relationship becomes closer or more time is spent alone and reviewing any incidents with supervisors. These steps will encourage the safety of our vulnerable, the integrity of our programs and the overall well-being of our volunteers.

All staff and volunteers are required to familiarize themselves with the parish guidelines as part of their orientation in the ministry assignment.

### 6.1 Safe Activities & General Guidelines

#### **These guidelines include activities on and off parish property:**

1. Volunteers should not spend extended time alone with children without the consent of the child's parent/guardian and the knowledge of the Ministry Coordinator or Leader.
2. Children should not be transported in an adult's vehicle without the parent/guardian's permission and the knowledge of the Ministry Coordinator or Leader.

3. Volunteers should not help children with toileting. For younger children who cannot manage alone, the volunteer should escort the child to their parent/guardian for needed assistance.
4. Adults who form a relationship with children through Church activities should not seek out opportunities to spend time with the child outside of parish activities. Parental permission is required, and the Ministry Coordinator or Leader should be informed if off-site interactions will occur.
5. Events away from parish property require parent/guardian consent prior to the event or activity. This includes a detailed itinerary of events and activities.
6. In cases where overnight camps or any events away from parish property take place every effort must be made to protect the child's privacy.
7. Girls and boys must have separate facilities for changing clothes and adults must have facilities separate from the children. Adults must not sleep in proximity to children under any circumstances.
8. Any physical contact between adults and children that occurs during ministry activities should occur in public and be of an appropriate nature (e.g. pats on the back, high-fives, etc.).
9. Parents/guardians of children enrolled in programs should be encouraged to ask questions, stay abreast of program activities, and talk with their children about the programs and the volunteers and staff they encounter.
10. Any staff or volunteers involved with programs where children and/or youth are involved must obtain the required high-risk screening for positions of trust prior to participation in ministries. Screening involves an in-person interview, three positive references and a current and clear police information check. This applies to off-site visitation programs as well.

## 6.2 Reporting Suspicions of Abuse for Children and Youth

Keeping the most vulnerable members of our community safe is the responsibility of everyone. If you have reasonable grounds to suspect a child is in need of help, call your local Children's Aid or Catholic Children's Aid Society. It is not your responsibility to prove or investigate the abuse; it is your responsibility to reach out and help protect the child.

### **Protocol in Reporting Suspected Abuse - Children and Youth under 18**

*From the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2018:*

"Under section 125 of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act every person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection must promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to a Children's Aid Society. This includes

persons who perform professional or official duties with respect to children such as health care workers, teachers, operators or employees of childcare programs or centres, police and lawyers.

In 2018 the age of protection was raised to include youth up to 18 years old. This means that youth who are 16 and 17 years old are now eligible to receive protection services from Children's Aid Societies. While reporting for 16 and 17-year old youth is not mandatory, contact your local Children's Aid Society if you have concerns about a youth.

It is not necessary to be certain that a child is or may be in need of protection to make a report to a children's aid society. 'Reasonable grounds' refers to the information that an average person, using normal and honest judgement, would need in order to decide to report.

This standard has been recognized by courts in Ontario as establishing a low threshold for reporting. The role of the Children's Aid Societies is to investigate calls made by the public using a professional and standardized process. The person making the report should bring forward their concerns and Children's Aid will determine if there is a sufficient basis to warrant further assessment of the concerns about the child."

### 6.3 Who is responsible to make a report to a Children's Aid Society?

"Professionals and officials have the same duty as the rest of the public to report their suspicion that a child is or may need protection. However, the CYFSA recognizes that people working closely with children have a special awareness of the signs of child abuse and neglect, and a particular responsibility to report their suspicions."

"Any professional or official who fails to report a suspicion is liable on conviction to a fine of up to \$5,000 if they obtained the information in the course of their professional or official duties. Reporting is not mandatory in the case of 16- and 17- year-olds and the offence/penalty provisions do not apply. [CYFSA s. 125 (5), (8), (9)]"

**Click to View:** [Duty to Report Legislation, Appendix D](#)

#### **Reporting Guidelines:**

- Everyone, including members of the public and professionals that work closely with children and youth, that has reasonable grounds to suspect abuse is required by law to report any suspected cases of abuse or neglect.
- The individual (including any staff member or volunteers) who has the suspicion is required to make the report directly to a society and cannot pass this information along to the Pastor, manager, staff member, or anyone else to make the report.
- The individual who has the suspicion is responsible for contacting the local Children's Aid Society if the situation occurs on or off parish property, at a camp location, or at a parish event off-site.
- After the report has been made to the local Children's Aid Society, the individual who

made the report should notify the Pastor of the situation. If the person suspected of abuse is a volunteer or a member of staff, the Pastor will then notify the Director of Human Resources and the Archbishop's Delegate to seek consultation. The volunteer or staff member will not participate in work or volunteer activities until the Children's Aid Society completes the investigation.

**Click to View:** [Steps for Reporting Child Abuse, Appendix B](#)

#### 6.4 Documentation of suspected abuse:

Document all statements, conversations, and observations as soon as possible. Dates, times, names of people involved as well as a clear and complete summary of events should be included.

Keep these documents strictly confidential. Any information documented should be used as reference in contacting the Children's Aid Society and shared with your Pastor once the report has been made. In the event the situation involves a police investigation, provide this information to assist with the investigation.

**Click to View:**

[Suspicion of Abuse Reporting Form - Minors](#)

[What will happen when I contact Children's Aid Society?](#)

[Contact List of Children's Aid Agencies, Appendix E](#)

## 7. Safe Guidelines: Involvement in Programs with Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities

These guidelines are not intended to hamper relationships between volunteers and elderly persons or persons with disabilities. 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.

We encourage 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 overall well-being of our volunteers.

### 7.1 Safe activities and general working conditions

**These guidelines include activities on and off parish property:**

1. Volunteers involved in visitations to homes, hospitals, respite care, nursing homes, and any long-term care facilities should travel in pairs with the prior knowledge of the Ministry Coordinator or Leader or Pastor.
2. For visits to acute care facilities and other public institutions the recommended practice is to work in pairs. In cases where this is not possible due to volunteer availability, the visiting volunteer must exercise good judgement with respect for safety and privacy. This would include keeping the room door open, not touching the

individual and making the visit known to the parish and the care facility or institution. All home visits require two or more volunteers.

3. Transportation arrangements should be made in advance with the approval of the supervisor or care provider.
4. Only a trained professional who is assigned to the facility should assist with use of washroom facilities or attend to any changing or undressing of the elderly or persons with disabilities. Volunteers should notify the appropriate attendant at the hospital, nursing home, or long-term care facility as necessary.
5. Volunteers should maintain relationships with elderly persons or persons with disabilities based on Ministry Position Descriptions. Deeper relationships and time spent alone must first be reviewed for appropriateness with the Ministry Coordinator.
6. Any staff or volunteers involved with programs that interact with elderly persons or persons with disabilities must obtain the required high-risk screening for positions of trust before participation in any ministries.
7. All staff and volunteers are required to familiarize themselves with the parish guidelines as part of their orientation in the ministry assignment.
8. Volunteers are not permitted to accept personal monetary gifts from anyone they are visiting or working with in the community.

## 7.2 Reporting Abuse and Inappropriate Conduct: Elderly Persons and Persons With Disabilities:

In situations involving an elderly person or a person with a disability where there is a suspicion or 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 the situation or suspicion to the appropriate bodies identified in section 7.4. The Director of Human Resources and the Archbishop's Delegate should be advised of this report. Use your best judgment to assess the situation or suspicion.

**Click to View:** [Steps for Reporting Abuse of the Elderly, Appendix B](#)

### **Documentation of suspected abuse:**

- Document all statements, conversations, and observations as soon as possible;
- Keep these documents strictly confidential and only pass them on to the Pastor;
- If the situation involves investigation with police services, provide this information to them to assist with the investigation.

The report should include:

- Dates, times, name of persons involved;

- Locations, a clear and complete summary of the incident(s);
- Situations or warning signs (if any).

**Click to View:** [Suspicion of Abuse Reporting Form – Elderly Persons & Persons with Disabilities](#)

#### 7.4 Legislative requirements: Reporting Elder Abuse

Relevant Legislation	Description	Who is Required to Report
<b>Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007</b>	<p>Abuse of a resident by anyone or neglect of a resident by the licensee or staff that resulted in harm or risk to a resident.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unlawful conduct that resulted in harm or a risk of harm to a resident.</li> <li>• Misuse or misappropriation of resident's funds.</li> <li>• Misuse or misappropriation of funding provided to a licensee under this Act or the Local Health System Integration Act, 2006, 2007. c. 8, ss. 24 (1), 195, (2).</li> </ul>	Mandatory reporting is required by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care by anyone who suspects harm or risk to the vulnerable person.
<b>Retirement Homes Act, 2010 (ACT)</b>	The Act states there is Mandatory Reporting required for people to report elder abuse to the Registrar of the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority (RHRA) if they suspect harm to retirement home residents (Section 75).	The Act indicates those required to report are individuals and corporations. This would include staff members of a retirement home, the licensee of a retirement home, volunteers, care and service providers, directors and officers of a retirement home.

**Click to View:** [Contact List of Elder Abuse Reporting Agencies, Appendix E](#)

#### 7.6 Reporting Abuse: Persons with Disabilities

Some of our most vulnerable communities involve persons with disabilities. In cases where any individual suspects that any person with a disability has been abused, Elder Abuse Ontario provides the following recommendation:

“An agency providing services is obligated to have policies and procedures on the notification of persons acting on behalf of the person with a developmental disability of an alleged, suspected or witnessed incident of abuse. They must also obtain the consent of the person with a developmental disability before notifying others, if the person is capable of providing consent.”

A developmental disability may impact a person physically, mentally, or in certain cases, on all levels. The most common developmental disabilities include:

- Autism
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD/ADD)
- Cerebral Palsy
- Conductive Disorder
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders
- Fragile X
- Hearing Loss
- Intellectual Disability
- Kernicterus
- Language and Speech Disorders
- Learning Disorders
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Mathematics Disorder
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder
- Stuttering
- Tourette's Syndrome
- Vision Impairment

Please note that this list is not exhaustive.

**Click to View:** [Mental Health and Consent for Persons with Disabilities Legislation, Appendix D](#)

## 8. Social Media Policy

### 8.1 Positions involved with Online Communication

The Archdiocese of Toronto recognizes the increasing influence and relevance of social media. As part of our pastoral plan, we aim to use modern technology to participate in the dialogue, embracing social media and other tools that will lift up the Gospel and provide powerful instruments of evangelization throughout our archdiocese.

We expect clergy, staff, and volunteers to use social media to conduct work and to communicate with professional and personal associates. It is our goal for Church personnel to use social media responsibly and to recognize that it is both a powerful educational and evangelization tool that can support the Archdiocese of Toronto's mission and vision, proclaiming the Good News to the world.

If there are reasonable grounds for believing that the social media policy is being violated, the Archdiocese of Toronto reserves the right to review the personal website, blog or social networking account of any clergy, staff or volunteer.

**When using these instruments of evangelization, it is important to recognize:**

1. Social media does not replace meaningful, engaging dialogue that is best encountered through face-to-face communication.
2. Anything published on social media should be considered as public as a homily from the pulpit, press release issued by the Archdiocese, notice in the parish bulletin or interview with a radio, television, or newspaper reporter.

## 8.2 Communication using logos and trademarks

Volunteers may use archdiocesan or related logos and official photographs on websites/blogs/ social media tools that have an official affiliation with the Archdiocese of Toronto, subject to review by a direct supervisor, Ministry Leader or the Pastor.

Volunteers may not use archdiocesan or affiliate trademarks or logos on their personal websites in a way that suggests or implies approval, endorsement, or oversight by the Archdiocese of Toronto.

## 8.3 Inappropriate language & images

The Archdiocese of Toronto will not tolerate Clergy, staff or volunteers posting any obscene, harassing, offensive, derogatory, defamatory, or otherwise potentially harmful comments, links or images, including sexually explicit or material deemed inappropriate which discredits or harms the reputation of the Archdiocese of Toronto.

## 8.4 Media Guidelines – General

- It is recommended that, for any event or ministry requiring a registration or permission form, a clause seeking permission to post photos or videos from such activities on a parish website or on social media channels be included.
- The Archdiocese of Toronto will review any alleged violations on a case-by-case basis.
- For official ministry communication, there must be at least two adults with administrative rights for each social media account.
- Personal social media accounts must not be used for ministry communication.
- The primary purpose of such communication shall be for providing information related to a ministry or event and not for socialization or other personal interaction.

## 8.5 Media Guidelines – Children and Youth

It is generally accepted that attendance at publicly held Church events (Mass, other parish celebrations) may result in photographs or video being recorded that may be broadcast or shared in any number of media, including local parish websites or other communications tools.

For situations such as these, a Media Release Form is recommended and should be signed by a minor's parent or guardian. Wherever possible, Church personnel should make every attempt to obtain verifiable consent from parents or guardians.

- Church personnel are forbidden from posting or distributing any personally identifiable information, including photos and or videos, of any child (under 16) or youth (under 18), without verifiable consent of a parent or guardian. This includes: full name, photos, home address, telephone number, email address or any detail that would allow someone to identify or contact a child or youth.

- Verifiable consent can be a release/permission form, an email from a parent or guardian or spoken permission by a parent or guardian with another adult present.
- Counseling of children through electronic methods, such as social media, is not permitted; Online “chatting” with children or youth is not permitted.
- Adults must not be in electronic communication with children or youth unless a parent/guardian has authorized such communication.
- Parents must be notified of the methods of communication which are used in each ministry and must be granted access to such communication if requested at any time. Authorization must identify the type of communication (e.g., mail), the youth’s specific contact information (email address) and contact information for parents or guardians.
- When using a ministry social media account, adults must not initiate "friend" requests with children but may accept "friend" requests from children who are involved in the ministry.
- When children or youth form their own social media groups, adults should not join these groups.
- Generally, neither personal nor ministry social media accounts should be used to contact children individually. If a child initiates a message, responses should be either a group message, or a message from the ministry account which will be copied for ministry files.
- Acceptable hours of communication with children or youth via other electronic communications shall be between 8a.m. and 9 p.m. Exceptions can be made only in emergency situations or to communicate time-sensitive information related to the ministry or ministry-related event.
- It is strongly recommended that minors not be “tagged” in social media photos.

**Click to View:** [Social Media Policy](#)

## 9. Privacy and Confidentiality, Electronic information

All volunteer files are considered confidential and are the property of both the Parish and the Archdiocese of Toronto. It is the policy of the Archdiocese of Toronto to protect the privacy of its volunteers and the information contained in the volunteer files. Files will be made available only to those persons authorized to have access (i.e. the Pastor, parish office staff, and parish screening coordinator).

- All volunteers have the right to review their volunteer file.
- The Pastor, or his designate will be present for these reviews.
- When a volunteer retires, or is dismissed, the volunteer file will be retained for 5 years at the parish in accordance with the Records Management Retention policy.

Volunteers of the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation for the Diocese of Toronto, in Canada, do hereby undertake to keep confidential and inviolate both during their period of service and in perpetuity all information which shall come to them regarding the affairs of the said Diocese and its clergy, employees, parishioners, excepting so far as the volunteer may be instructed by the Pastor/Ministry Head or other authority members of the said Diocese or its authorized representatives to divulge the same or except in so far as he/she maybe called upon to divulge in a Court of Law.

Breach of confidentiality will provide enough grounds to terminate the person's volunteer service with the Archdiocese. All volunteers of the Archdiocese of Toronto are required to have a copy of their volunteer file on parish property to meet with guidelines outlined in the Risk Management and Environment Policies of the Archdiocese of Toronto.

Any electronic volunteer data that is collected will be stored securely and password protected.

## **10. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005**

### **10.1 Our Commitment**

The Archdiocese of Toronto and its associated parishes are committed to providing a welcoming, accessible and inclusive environment for all its parishioners, visitors, volunteers, clergy and employees. We work to ensure that the standards of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA,) 2005 are conscientiously observed and all our parishes provide a welcoming and equal opportunity for worship.

Our family of faith works to assure that all persons within our community are aware of their responsibilities to foster an accessible and inclusive environment for persons with disabilities. Our belief that encouraging an atmosphere that respects the worth, dignity and independence of all people as children of God, creates an accessible, inclusive, and welcoming environment for worship.

To ensure greater awareness and responsiveness to the needs of a person with disabilities, the Archdiocese will provide training for clergy, staff and volunteers who provide pastoral care or service to parishioners or members of the parish.

**Click to View:** [Policy Statements on the AODA for the Archdiocese of Toronto](#)

## Appendix A: Forms

[A1. Violent Incident Reporting Form](#)

[A2. Parent/Guardian Consent Form & Liability Waiver](#)

[A3. Suspicion of Abuse Reporting Form – Minors](#)

[A4. Suspected Abuse Reporting Form – Elderly Persons & Persons with Disabilities](#)

[A5. Media Release Form](#)

## Appendix B: Procedures

### B1. Steps for Complaints and Investigations

1. The Pastor or direct supervisor will immediately take appropriate action to resolve any situation that involves harassment or violent behavior.
2. This includes, but is not limited to, calling 911 for immediate assistance from police services.
3. Record of the incident should be taken.
  - a. Record date(s), time(s), unacceptable behaviour(s), any witnesses to the incident.
  - b. This may be recorded using the Violent Incident Reporting Form.
4. The Human Resources Department will assist volunteers, employees, pastors and supervisors in investigating acts and incidences of harassment or violent behaviour.
5. Incidents should be reported promptly to the Director of Human Resources.
6. Any report involving a threat, harassment or any act of violence made by a volunteer or an employee in good faith will not result in any disciplinary action or retaliation. Any such act of retaliation must be reported to the Human Resources Department.
7. Should the volunteer or employee be harassed or threatened by an individual from outside the parish and have reason to believe that this person may harm them in any way, or place anyone at the parish in danger of being harmed, the volunteer must report their concerns to the Pastor.
8. Should a volunteer or employee have a restraining order or no-contact order against another individual at the parish the volunteer or employee may be required to notify his/her Pastor/Supervisor and provide a copy of that order to the Human Resources Department.
  - a. This will likely be required in instances where the individual strongly feels that the aggressor may attempt to contact the volunteer or employee, in violation of the court order.

- b. Such information will be kept confidential to the extent that the safety of other volunteers and parish staff is not compromised.
  - c. If there is fear for safety concerns, some information with respect to the potential aggressor may be shared with volunteers who could be exposed to danger.
9. If any visitor to the parish makes a verbal threat or assaults a volunteer or employee or any other person either on or off parish property, the individual who has witnessed the incident is required to immediately contact the police and notify their Pastor/Supervisor.
10. All submitted harassment and violence reports are kept confidential, filed in the Archdiocese of Toronto's Human Resources Department.

## B2. Complaints and Investigations: Minor incidents

1. The Pastor or direct supervisor will determine if mediation is appropriate and if so, mediate or arrange for mediation of the situation, conduct the appropriate investigation immediately; and
2. Within ten working days, write a report outlining the details, facts and witnesses of the incident and submit the report to the Director of Human Resources.
3. If the alleged harasser is a volunteer or an employee, the Pastor/Supervisor will apply appropriate disciplinary measures based on the facts of the incident and the assailant/harasser's volunteer or employment record, in consultation with the Director of Human Resources.
4. The Director of Human Resources will assist volunteers, employees, pastors and supervisors in investigating acts and incidences of harassment or violent behavior.
5. An investigation should not be undertaken without guidance from the Director of Human Resources.
6. Any report involving a threat, harassment or any act of violence made by a volunteer or an employee in good faith will not result in any disciplinary action or retaliation.
7. Any such act of retaliation must be reported to the Director of Human Resources.

## B3. Complaints and Investigations: Serious incidents

Police and other Emergency Services may be contacted first depending on the severity of the incident.

### **The Pastor/Supervisor must:**

1. First ensure the safety of volunteers, employees and him/herself.
2. Ensure proper medical treatment is provided or arranged.

3. Contact the authorities as soon as possible (i.e. police, Ministry of Labour, where appropriate) to report the incident.
4. Contact the Director of Human Resources as soon as possible to assess who should be involved in the investigation.
5. After the completion of the investigation, cooperate with the Director of Human Resources and any other parties required by law to prepare a report and implement recommendations.
6. Consult with the Director of Human Resources regarding any disciplinary action.
7. The Director of Human Resources will assist volunteers, employees, pastors and supervisors with investigating acts and incidences of harassment or violent behaviour.
8. Any report involving a threat, harassment or any act of violence made by a volunteer or an employee in good faith will not result in any disciplinary action or retaliation.
9. Any such act of retaliation must be reported to the Director of Human Resources.

#### B4. How to Report Child Abuse – Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies

1. There is someone available to take your call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and you can make your report anonymously.
2. It is understood that in sensitive situations such as these it can be difficult to decide whether a call or report should be made, and you may experience emotions and concerns in contemplating the call to action.
3. We encourage you to use your best judgement and discretion when contacting the Children’s Aid Society. They will be able to assess any possible risk and make decisions as to whether service is required.
4. Through this approach, Children’s Aid Society can then offer guidance to the caller to ensure that children who need protection receive the services they need.
5. Each report will be investigated, and the situation will be evaluated to ensure the child and family receives the support necessary to keep the child safe.
6. It is not your responsibility to determine whether abuse or neglect has occurred.
7. Children’s Aid is responsible for investigating and assessing the need for protection or possible involvement.
8. Filing a report to Children’s Aid does not prove abuse or neglect; however, it allows authorities to take the appropriate actions to determine the risk of the situation.

## B5. Reporting Abuse of Elderly Persons or Persons with Disabilities

1. If you are concerned about an elderly person that is at risk of being harmed, requires urgent care, or if the matter is an emergency, contact the local police services. Dial 9-1-1 to report the suspicion immediately.
2. Contact appropriate agency to make report: See Appendix E2.
3. Ensure that the Pastor or Director has been notified of the situation after you have made the call to the local police services.
4. The Pastor/Director will, in turn, notify the Director of Human Resources at the Archdiocese of Toronto's Catholic Pastoral Centre.
5. Please note that no other individuals aside from the local authorities may form an investigation. Investigations are not to be completed at the parish or department level.

## Appendix C: Policies

### C1: Safe Environment Policy

#### Overview

The Archdiocese of Toronto has implemented a series of policies and procedures to foster a safe environment for all those who interact with the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Toronto. Those we serve include young people, adults and seniors who all make up the body of Christ among us.

#### Volunteer Screening Program

The VSP is designed to create, maintain and promote a safe environment for all those to whom we minister, to support parish volunteers and preserve their safety, integrity and reputation as well as to ensure that we fulfill our duty and obligations as a caring faith community.

The Department of Volunteer Screening assists parishes in carrying out the program by providing workshops for committee members, parish visits, answering inquiries and supplying information and materials to complete the process.

**Click to View:** [Complete Safe Environment Policy, 2019](#)

### C2: Fit for Duty for Volunteers and Independent Contractors

#### Overview

All those who provide their time and talents to the Archdiocese of Toronto are a valuable resource, and for that reason their health and safety are of paramount concern. The Archdiocese of Toronto has adopted this policy to communicate its expectations and guidelines surrounding alcohol and drug (including cannabis) use, misuse, and abuse.

## Guidelines

We expect Volunteers and Independent Contractors to exercise good judgement at all times. Those under the influence of drugs or alcohol while providing service can pose serious health and safety risks both to themselves and others. To help ensure a safe and healthy workplace, and subject to very narrow exceptions, the Archdiocese of Toronto reserves the right to prohibit certain items and substances from being brought onto or being present on our premises.

## Expectations

The following expectations apply to all those who provide services to the Archdiocese of Toronto, whether on or off property:

- Volunteers and Independent Contractors are expected to arrive fit for duty and able to perform their duties safely and to standard;
- Volunteers and Independent Contractors must remain fit for duty for the duration of their service time;
- Use, possession, distribution, or sale of drugs or alcohol during service time, is strictly prohibited;
- Volunteers and Independent Contractors are prohibited from providing services while under the influence of alcohol, recreational cannabis and any other non-prescribed substances;
- Volunteers and Independent Contractors on medically approved medication must communicate to Pastor/Ministry Head any potential risk, limitation, or restriction requiring modification of duties or temporary reassignment; and
- Volunteers and Independent Contractors are expected to abide by all governing legislation pertaining to the possession and use of cannabis.

**Click to View:** [Complete Fit for Duty Policy, 2019](#)

## C3. Social Media Policy

### Overview

“The great digital continent does not only involve technology, but is made up of real men and women who bring with them what they carry inside, their hopes, their suffering, their concerns, their pursuit of truth, beauty, and good. We need to show and bring Christ to others, sharing these joys and hopes, like Mary, who brought Christ to the hearts of men and women...”

– Pope Francis’ address to Pontifical Council for Social Communications – Sept. 21, 2013

**Click to View:** [Complete Social Media Policy, 2023](#)

## C4. Supporting the AODA and the Multi-year accessibility Plan

### Policy Statements

The Archdiocese of Toronto is committed to working towards being compliant with all the standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), as they become law.

The Archdiocese of Toronto recognizes the fundamental importance of developing, implementing, and enforcing standards in a timely manner in order to achieve accessibility to Ontarians with disabilities. The Archdiocese of Toronto is committed to the principles of independence, dignity, integration, and equality of opportunity and to meeting the needs of people with disabilities, through the implementation of this policy.

The Archdiocese of Toronto is committed to establishing, maintaining and implementing policies as well as associated practices and procedures of the Integrated Regulation (191/11), specifically in the areas of information, communications and employment, and to meet the accessibility needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner.

The Archdiocese of Toronto is committed to the establishment, implementation, maintenance, and documentation of a multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines the Archdiocese's strategies to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under the Integrated Regulation.

The multi-year accessibility plan will indicate how the Archdiocese of Toronto intends to implement the requirements of the integrated regulation within the legislated timelines. The Archdiocese of Toronto, when providing information to, or communicating with, a person with a disability, will provide information and communication in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

The commitments in this policy are intended to ensure that accessibility remains a priority in the Archdiocese of Toronto's decision-making process and will serve to assist in ensuring that decisions do not inadvertently create barriers.

**Click to View:** [Complete AODA Policy and Multi-year Accessibility Plan](#)

## C5. Violence Prevention Policy

### **Our Commitment**

The Archdiocese of Toronto is committed to providing a safe and respectful work environment for all staff and visitors. Violent behaviour is unacceptable from anyone at work or in any situation related to employment with our organization.

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, volunteers, clergy, Pastors, and Supervisors working with the Archdiocese of Toronto, including the Catholic Pastoral Centre, all parishes and other work locations. This policy is designed to ensure that our workplace is a respectful and safe place for everyone, and to prevent acts of violence from occurring on our premises or where we conduct activities.

**Click to View:** [Complete Violence Prevention Policy](#)

## C6. Harassment Prevention Policy

### **Our Commitment**

The Archdiocese of Toronto is committed to providing a safe and respectful work environment for all staff, volunteers, and visitors. No one may be harassed, and no one has the right to harass anyone else, at work or in any situation related to employment with our organization.

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, volunteers, clergy, Pastors, and Supervisors working for the Archdiocese of Toronto, including the Catholic Pastoral Centre, all parishes and other work locations. This policy is designed to ensure the workplace is a respectful and safe place for everyone, and to prevent acts of harassment from occurring on our premises or where we conduct activities.

**Click to View:** [Complete Harassment Prevention Policy](#)

## C7. Health and Safety Policy

The Archdiocese of Toronto recognizes the dignity and worth of every individual employed in its parishes, the Catholic Pastoral Centre and other locations. The Archdiocese, as employer at the parishes, the Catholic Pastoral Centre and satellite offices recognizes its responsibility to take all reasonable precautions to ensure safe and healthy conditions for our workers and those having access to our premises. We take our responsibilities seriously with respect to health and safety. We comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act and other related legislation.

Our commitment, through good management practices and active worker participation, is to strive to maintain a workplace that is free of personal injuries, occupational illnesses, workplace violence, workplace harassment, workplace sexual harassment, damage to property and harm to the environment.

**Click to View:** [Complete Health and Safety Policy](#)

## Appendix D: Legislation

[D1. Duty to Report - Child Youth & Family Services Act, 2017, s. 125](#)

[D2. Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007](#)

[D3. Retirement Homes Act, 2010 \(ACT\), s. 75 \(1\)](#)

[D4. Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008](#)

[D5. Health Care Consent Act, 1996](#)

[D6. Mental Health Act, 1990](#)

[D7. Powers of Attorney Act, 1990](#)

[D8. Ontario Human Rights Commission](#)

[D9. Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, S.O. 2004, c. 3, Sched. A:](#)

## Appendix E: Agency Contact Lists

### E1. Children's Aid Societies Contact List

Children's Aid Society	Phone #	Location	Cities/municipalities served:
<b>Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto</b>	416-395-1500	Toronto	Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough, Toronto
<b>Children's Aid Society of Toronto</b>	416-924-4640	Toronto	Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough, Toronto
<b>Dufferin Child and Family Services</b>	519-941-1530	Orangeville	Mono, Orangeville
<b>Durham Children's Aid Society</b>	905-433-1551	Oshawa	Ajax, Bowmanville, Brock, Clarington, Durham (region), Oshawa, Pickering, Port Perry, Scugog, Uxbridge, Whitby
<b>Peel Children's Aid Society</b>	1-888-700-0996	Mississauga	Bolton, Brampton, Caledon, Mississauga, Peel Region
<b>Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions</b>	705-726-6587	Barrie	Adjala-Tosorontio, Barrie, Bracebride, Bradford West, Clearview, Collingwood, Essa, Innisfil, Georgian Bay, Midland, New Tecumseth, Orillia, Oro-Medonte, Penetanguishene, Ramara, Tiny, Wasaga Beach
<b>York Region Children's Aid Society</b>	905-895-2318	Newmarket	Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, King, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Vaughan, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Woodbridge, York

## E2. Elder Abuse Agencies Contact List

Agency	Contact Information
<b>Advocacy Centre for the Elderly</b>	416-598-2656
<b>Assaulted Women's Help Line</b>	1-866-863-0511 (toll-free) TTY: 1-866-863-7868 (toll-free)
<b>Crime Stoppers</b>	1-800-222-TIPS (8477)
<b>Elder Abuse Ontario</b>	416-916-6728
<b>Femàide</b>	1-877-336-2433 (toll-free) available in French only
<b>Long-Term Care ACTION line</b>	1-866-434-0144 TTY: 1-800-387-5559
<b>Ministry of the Attorney General's Victim Support Line</b>	1-888-579-2888 (toll-free) 416-314-2447 (Toronto)
<b>Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority</b>	1-855-ASK-RHRA 1-855-275-7472
<b>Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee</b>	1-800-366-0335 (toll-free)
<b>Ontario Association of Community Care Access Centres</b>	416-750-1720
<b>Ontario Provincial Police</b>	1-888-310-1122 (toll-free) TTY: 1-888-210-1133
<b>Senior's Safety Line</b>	1-866-299-1011 (toll-free)
<b>Senior's Infoline</b>	1-888-910-1999 (toll-free) 416-314-7511 (Toronto) TTY: 1-800-387-5559
<b>Victim Support Line</b>	1-888-579-2888 (toll-free) 416-314-2447 (Toronto) Website: <a href="http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca">www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca</a>

## Appendix F: Additional Resources

### What will happen when I contact a Children's Aid Society?

It is understood that in sensitive situations such as these it can be difficult to decide whether a call or report should be made, and you may experience emotions and concerns in contemplating the call to action.

- There will be someone available to take your call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and you can make your report anonymously.
- When a call is made to the Children's Aid Society, the individual will speak with a child protection specialist who is specially trained to listen to your concerns and ask questions before deciding how urgent the situation is and what type of intervention or follow-up is needed.
- If a child is in imminent danger, a child protection worker will respond immediately.
- It is helpful to provide any information to assist them with the location of the child (i.e. date, times, locations, names, description of the situation, contact information etc.).
- Children's Aid Workers are professionals who are trained to assess your information using comprehensive guidelines to determine the risk in each situation. Many factors are considered when determining how to investigate your concerns, including the age of the child, presence of physical injuries and other red flags that may indicate risk of harm.
- Every report received by a Children's Aid Society is reviewed by a Child Protection Worker who then consults with a supervisor to determine the appropriate response time.
- Individual circumstances and level of risk for the children involved determine the response times.



## Acknowledgement Form & Agreement Statement

Please print and sign this form once you have read the Volunteer Guidelines and Code of Conduct. Provide a copy to the Parish Screening Coordinator who will add this form to your volunteer file folder.

Thank you for completing this portion of the orientation and training at your parish.

### Acknowledgement of Receipt:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, verify that I have read and understood the  
*(Name of volunteer)*  
“Strengthening the Caring Community Volunteer Guidelines and Code of Conduct.”

### Agreement statement:

I agree to abide by the policies and guidelines outlined in this document during the course of my volunteer assignment and if I have any questions concerning this policy, I will contact the Volunteer Screening Department by either of the following methods:

Email: [volunteerscreening@archtoronto.org](mailto:volunteerscreening@archtoronto.org)

Phone: 437-524-8542

I further understand that the Archdiocese of Toronto may revise these guidelines at its discretion based on any provincial or federal legislative changes.

**Signature of Volunteer:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*(and Parent/Guardian of minors under 16)*

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

**Parish /Department Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parish Location (City):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ministry Group:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Volunteer Position:** \_\_\_\_\_