



OFFICE OF SAFE ENVIRONMENT

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR DIOCESAN VOLUNTEERS

The Diocese of Fall River (the Diocese) is committed to providing a safe environment for all people. For purposes of this Code of Conduct, the term “Volunteers” shall include all who volunteer for the Diocese. This Code of Conduct shall not expire unless replaced by an updated Code of Conduct.

The Safe Environment Code of Conduct for Volunteers provides a mandatory set of concrete guidelines established to further the mission of the Diocese by:

1. Protecting the minors, vulnerable adults, and all with whom we interact.
2. Providing practical guidance to enable Volunteers to effectively minister.
3. Building positive relationships based on trust and integrity.

Volunteers must maintain an open, transparent, and trustworthy relationship with minors and vulnerable adults. The **Rule of Two** (2) is the best practices approach when working with minors and vulnerable adults. At least two (2) Office of Safe Environment (OSE) approved adults should be present in all activities involving minors and vulnerable adults.

1. While in service to the Church, Volunteers must conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church.
2. Volunteers must be aware of their own and others’ vulnerability when working alone with minors or vulnerable adults and should avoid any conduct that a reasonable person could view as improper.
3. Volunteers should avoid being alone with any unrelated minor except for reasonable, common-sense exceptions, such as emergency situations and circumstances where the interaction is incidental and not extended. Keeping in mind the **Rule of Two**, one-on-one meetings with an unrelated minor must be held in a public area or in an area visible to others through a window or open door. Whenever possible, parents and/or guardians should attend or be told of such meetings in advance.
4. Volunteers who work with home-bound and vulnerable adults should serve in the company of another OSE-approved adult whenever possible.
5. Physical contact with minors or vulnerable adults must be appropriate and nonsexual. An occasional high-five, handshake or similar gesture that respects the minor’s or vulnerable adult’s personal boundaries would be considered appropriate. Physical contact must never occur in private.
6. The use or possession of illegal drugs and the use of alcohol when volunteering with minors or vulnerable adults is prohibited.
7. Volunteers must not acquire, possess or distribute any pornographic or sexually explicit, profane, or otherwise inappropriate materials, by any means, including technology, while working or volunteering for the Diocese. Volunteers are prohibited from viewing pornographic materials on, or taking pornographic materials onto, the property of the diocese, a parish or a school. Suspected child pornography must be

referred to the Volunteer's diocesan supervisor, who will contact law enforcement immediately, and notify the Office of Safe Environment.

8. Volunteers must not share private overnight accommodations (bedroom, hotel room, tent, camper, bed, etc.) with an unrelated minor or vulnerable adult. In situations 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.
9. Communications by Volunteers with an unrelated minor or vulnerable adult must be for reasons related to professional or volunteer duties, and with the consent of parents or guardians. Volunteers must maintain appropriate boundaries in all communications with an unrelated minor or vulnerable adult including through the use of electronic devices or web-based media. The Rule of Two applies in electronic communications. Another OSE-approved adult or parent/guardian should be copied on all communications between volunteers and unrelated minors. Volunteers should not use personal cell phones to communicate with minors. If using text, social media or other electronic forms of communication as part of ministry, seek guidance from your supervisor regarding appropriate use.
10. Because gifts have often been used in the process of grooming potential victims, Volunteers should carefully consider any gifts given to a minor or vulnerable adult. Gifts should not be of significant monetary value and should not show preference to one minor or vulnerable adult over another.
11. When volunteering for any diocesan ministries or events, any relevant faculty and student handbooks and/or policies that may have been acknowledged by the volunteer shall be in effect as well.
12. If any Volunteer notices behavior from another Volunteer that violates this Code of Conduct, he or she should immediately report these concerns to a supervisor and/or contact the Office of Safe Environment.

POLICY ON REPORTING ABUSE

Any Volunteer, whether a mandated reporter or not, that has reason to suspect that any minor or vulnerable adult has been the victim of physical abuse, sexual abuse, sexual assault or neglect shall report that information immediately to the supervisor of the program or facility (i.e. parish Director of Religious Education, Director of Youth Ministry, Principal, etc). If the victim is a minor, the supervisor will file a 51A child abuse report with the Department of Children and Families. If the victim is a vulnerable adult, the supervisor will contact the appropriate authorities. In all cases the supervisor will notify the Office of Safe Environment. A Volunteer may contact the authorities directly if he or she chooses, so long as the supervisor and/or the Office of Safe Environment are made aware that a report is being made.

Signature of Volunteer
acknowledging this Code and the obligations thereunder.
(Please retain a copy for your records.)

Print Full Name: _____

Dated: _____

OSE 12/2024