

Responsible Ministry—Volunteer Guidelines for Medium and High Sensitivity Roles

St. Philip Church & St. Clare Mission
Richmond and Dwyer Hill, Ontario

1 Responsibilities of Parish Volunteers

The letters of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus show that from earliest time, ministry was expected to be marked by love that overflows into service, stewardship, trust and exemplary personal conduct. The call and commitment to serve God involves accepting certain responsibilities as individuals and as members of our communities.

Volunteers can expect to:

- be treated with respect;
- receive the training and orientation necessary to perform their duties;
- receive support and guidance;
- work in ministries that are compatible with their interests and skills;
- be appreciated for their contributions.

Volunteers are expected to:

- be Christian witnesses, models of Christian living, and act at all times in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church;
- attend training and orientation sessions;
- provide a safe and caring environment for activities;
- be reliable, arrive on time and be prepared;
- provide adequate notice to the ministry director if unable to perform their duties;
- report any changes in address and telephone number to the ministry director;
- inform the ministry director or the parish priest if they have any concerns for the well-being of the participants, other volunteers or the church;
- respect the confidentiality of the participants, other volunteers and the church;
- minister within the guidelines of the ministry role descriptors.

2 Guidelines for Working with the most vulnerable of participants - Children, Seniors, Disabled:

The following guidelines are intended as a general overview as to how volunteers should interact with the most vulnerable of participants. Society has become very sensitive to ensuring the safety of children, seniors, and the disabled. These guidelines are not intended to hamper relationships between adults and vulnerable participants or create suspicion but rather to provide clear rules for behavior so that volunteers understand what is expected of them to ensure the safety of our most vulnerable participants, the integrity of our programs and the well-being of our volunteers.

- a) respect the dignity and spirit of children, youth, seniors, and the disabled;
- b) exercise good judgment and common sense when working with children, youth, seniors, and the disabled ;
- c) not to spend extended time alone with vulnerable participants, such as seniors, children or the disabled, without the consent and knowledge of ministry directors and the consent of parent(s)/guardian(s) where children are concerned;
- d) protect the child/youth's privacy when an adult is required to be alone with children/youth (e.g., overnight camps or field trips), girls and boys shall not change together nor with adults, and adults shall not sleep in close proximity to children/youth;
- e) ensure off-site interactions with a child/youth with whom relationships have been formed through parish activities occur with the knowledge and permission of the child/youth's parent(s) or guardian(s);

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- f) obtain permission from parent(s) or guardian(s) prior to assisting, if toileting is necessary;
- g) provide adequate adult supervision by maintaining appropriate adult to child/youth ratios for the activities and age group, ensuring, where reasonably possible, that at least two adults are in attendance while supervising or accompanying children/youth, thus avoiding potentially compromising situations by preventing the potential for abuse and/or the allegations of abuse;
- h) provide transportation in personal vehicles only with written permission of parent(s) or guardian(s) and knowledge of ministry director and ensure the driver is in compliance with the driver policy;
- i) refuse to take any money or property from vulnerable participants for providing volunteer ministry;
- j) refrain from using vulgar or inappropriate language when working with vulnerable participants – no shouting, swearing or calling of names;
- k) not to hit or strike a vulnerable participant even in so-called ‘play’ or use physical punishment of any kind;
- l) realize that bullying, physical, verbal or cultural abuse and sexual harassment, neglect or any other type of abuse is unacceptable;
- m) be alert to vulnerable individuals at risk, know the signs of abuse and be approachable to those in need - if abuse is suspected, you must report it;
- n) recognize that you are operating in a position of trust, therefore personal, medical, financial, and emotional information pertaining to vulnerable individuals, as well as conversations with parent(s)/guardian(s) where children/youth are concerned must be kept confidential;
- o) not to respect confidentiality in the following situations:
 - when a child or youth threatens suicide;
 - when a minor (under 18) reports physical or sexual abuse;
 - when the volunteer’s or someone else’s well-being is being threatened;
 - when the situation is beyond the volunteer’s experience or expertise.

In all cases a certain amount of discretion rests with the adult based on his or her knowledge and the nature of the relationship with the individual, his/her family, the setting and the nature of the activities. Talking to parent(s)/guardian(s), keeping them informed and being transparent helps ensure the safety of the individuals, the integrity of our programs and the well-being of our volunteers who work with vulnerable participants.