



Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

Office of Child and Youth Protection

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YOUTH (14 to 17 years old) VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT

This Code of Conduct is for use with minor youth volunteers (non-paid) between the ages of 14 to 17 years of age who serve and volunteer in parishes, schools or diocesan offices within the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown.

Adults responsible for the supervision of youth in ministry or work situations need to review this document with the youth and explain any part that may not be understood. This can be done in a group or individual meeting. This form is to be signed by the youth, his or her parent/guardian, supervisor, and stored with the Safe Environment documentation on file at the corresponding parish, school or diocesan organization and a copy sent to the attention of the Office of Child and Youth Protection for the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown.

Please note that for the purposes of this Code, the words “minor” and “youth” are used to describe all persons under the age of 18. “Vulnerable adults” are persons with physical, mental, or emotional conditions that cause them to be unable to defend or protect themselves.

Any unlawful conduct would be subject to reporting to appropriate law enforcement authorities, in addition to the parent/guardian as indicated.

Purpose:

You are about to begin what could become a lifelong commitment of working or volunteering in the Church. It is a privilege to help carry on the mission of Jesus – a mission which no one takes lightly. As a minor, it is important that you understand and follow certain rules and guidelines, both for your own protection and for the protection of those to whom you minister. The Church takes the issue of misconduct very seriously and any instance of misconduct will be evaluated carefully. You are urged to report misconduct that you see to your adult supervisor. Likewise, your own conduct must be beyond question. You have been entrusted with a responsible position and are expected to “*Let your light so shine before all, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*” (Matt 5:14)

This **Code of Conduct** applies to your behavior as it relates to your interaction with minors, any adult or vulnerable adults on behalf of a parish, school or diocesan organization.

To ensure the safety of those whom we serve, all youth (under the age of 18) who wish to volunteer with other youth, any adult or vulnerable adults, must review and sign this Code of Conduct along with their parent/guardian and supervisor.

While serving as a youth employee or volunteer, I will:

- At all times, protect and guide all those entrusted to my care
- Demonstrate patience, courtesy, respect and dignity
- Be positive, supportive, and caring in my speech and interactions with minors, other adults and vulnerable adults
- Use positive words and encouragement to change behavior and engage others to do likewise
- Maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries with minors, other adults and vulnerable adults. Examples of permissible physical contact include:
 - Brief side hugs or arm around the shoulder
 - Hand-shakes or “high fives”
 - Holding hands while walking with young children or the unsteady

- Brief pat on the shoulder/upper back
- Holding hands during prayer
- Brief touching of hand, head, shoulder or arm
- Always be in the presence of an adult when interacting with minors, other adults or vulnerable adults. This means that an adult should be nearby to see and hear what I am doing and help me if I need assistance.
- Promptly report any uncomfortable, inappropriate or bullying behavior to my supervisor
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse; report suspected abuse to my supervisor, or if it involves my supervisor, report it to the Pastor/Parish Life Coordinator/Director
- Observe confidentiality when describing my work experiences to protect the identity of those whom I serve
- Dress appropriately, consistent with my role and assigned activities; this includes wearing clothing with no offensive or profane messages and pictures
- Be aware that children and young people can easily become infatuated with a youth leader or an adult. If I think this is happening, I will immediately discourage it. I will make my supervisor aware of it so that he/she can resolve the matter, including reassigning me to other activities.
- Consult with adult supervisors on the appropriateness of communicating (electronically or through any other form of communication) with minors, all adults or vulnerable adults whom I serve through this employment or volunteer ministry. I will inform my supervisor and obtain parental/guardianship permission before communicating with those I serve.

While working as a youth employee or volunteer, I will not:

- Smoke, vape or use tobacco products in the presence of youth, any adult or vulnerable adults
- Use, possess, be under the influence or impaired by alcohol or drugs at any time while working or volunteering
- Possess weapons of any kind
- Pose any health risk to youth, all adults or vulnerable adults (fevers, flu and other contagious situations)
- Strike, spank, shake or slap youth, other adults or vulnerable adults
- Use or allow profanity in the presence of minors, other adults or vulnerable adults
- Acquire, possess, distribute or show sexually explicit, violent or otherwise inappropriate images of minors/adults including but not limited to books, music, games, photographs, films or computer generated images
- Accept gifts from or give gifts to minors, other adults or vulnerable adults without approval from my supervisor

Acknowledgement and Consent:

I understand that I may face consequences up to and including dismissal from service and/or termination of my role for violations of this Code. We, the undersigned, understand that the parent/guardian will be notified at the time of any infraction requiring dismissal from work or volunteer assignment at the parish, school or diocesan organization where the young person is working or ministering.

We, the undersigned, have read and understand the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown's Code of Conduct for Youth Volunteers.

Name of Parish/School/Diocesan Program: _____

Physical Location(s) Youth will volunteer: _____ City: _____

Name of Youth (PLEASE PRINT): _____

Signature of Youth: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Location Supervisor: _____ Date: _____