



# Code of Conduct

## Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

### For Volunteers

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*This document replaces the previous Code of Conduct.  
July 2006*

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# Code of Conduct

## Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

### For Volunteers

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### **Preface**

This *Code of Conduct for Volunteers (Code of Conduct)* is intended for use as a risk management tool by bishops, pastors, superiors of religious communities/institutes, and administrators. The purpose of the *Code of Conduct* is to assist in developing and implementing uniform guidelines for appropriate behavior in situations of pastoral counseling and spiritual direction. The *Code of Conduct* is not intended to address all situations that may arise in pastoral counseling relationships. It is intended to create a structure for addressing a variety of circumstances that, if not appropriately addressed, may create a risk of incidents, allegations, claims and/or lawsuits.

The Church must be exemplary. Volunteers should and will be held accountable for their behavior. In order to maintain the highest level of accountability, there must be a clear and unambiguous blueprint of appropriate and inappropriate behavior. The *Code of Conduct* provides a basic structure for identifying limits. It is intended as a “continuous improvement document.” Therefore, your suggestions and recommendations for additions and revisions are encouraged.

The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings has modeled this *Code of Conduct* on the VIRTUS® sample, and is now implemented in adherence to and in strict compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Revised Edition*<sup>1</sup> (*Charter*) and *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests, Deacons, or other Church Personnel*<sup>2</sup> (*Norms*). The *Charter* and *Norms* are available on the Internet at <http://www.usccb.org/comm/restoretrust.htm>.

<sup>1</sup> The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Revised Edition*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C., November 2002.

<sup>2</sup> The *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Congregation for Bishops, Washington, D.C., December 8, 2002. Note: The *Norms* were officially promulgated as particular law of the United States on December 12, 2002.



## I. Preamble

Volunteers in our parishes, religious communities/institutes, and organizations must uphold Christian values and conduct. The *Code of Conduct for Volunteers (Code of Conduct)* provides a set of standards for conduct in certain pastoral situations.

## II. Responsibility

The public and private conduct of volunteers can inspire and motivate people, but it can also scandalize and undermine the people's faith. Volunteers must, at all times, be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work. They must also know that God's goodness and grace supports them in their ministry.

Responsibility for adherence to the *Code of Conduct* rests with the individual. Volunteers who disregard this *Code of Conduct* will be subject to remedial action by the Diocese. Corrective action may take various forms—from a verbal reproach to removal from the ministry—depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm.



### **III. Standards**

#### **1. Conduct with Youth**

*Volunteers working with youth shall maintain an open and trustworthy relationship between youth and adult supervisors.*

- 1.1 Volunteers must be aware of their own and others' vulnerability when working alone with youth. Use a team approach to managing youth activities.
- 1.2 Physical contact with youth can be misconstrued and should occur (a) only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and (b) never in private.
- 1.3 Volunteers should refrain from (a) the illegal possession and/or illegal use of drugs and/or alcohol at all times, and (b) the use of alcohol when working with youth.
- 1.4 Volunteers should not provide shared, private, overnight accommodation for individual young people including, but not limited to, accommodations in any Church-owned facility, private residence, hotel room, or any other place where there is no other adult supervision present.
  - 1.4.1 In rare, emergency situations, when accommodation is necessary for the health and well-being of the youth, the volunteer should take extraordinary care to protect all parties from the appearance of impropriety and from all risk of harm.
  - 1.4.2 Use a team approach to managing emergency situations.
  - 1.4.3 Two or more adults must be present for events involving minors in high-risk settings. The recommended ratio for chaperones/supervisors is 1:6. In the event a sufficient number of chaperones is not available, the event must be cancelled.
  - 1.4.4 Facilities must be monitored during all organization activities.
  - 1.4.5 Children may be released only to a parent, guardian or other person who has been authorized in writing to take custody of the minor(s).
  - 1.4.6 Parental approval must be obtained before permitting children to participate in athletic events or any other activity that involves potential risk.
  - 1.4.7 Dress must always be in keeping with modesty and Christian Values.
  - 1.4.8 Only qualified adult drivers may transport minors. Appropriate permission must be received and all proper insurance forms must be completed and approved by the authority of the organization. Forms and procedures are obtained from Catholic Mutual Group, the insurance provider for the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings (visit the diocesan website for forms).



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- 1.4.9 Parental permission must be obtained, including a signed medical treatment form, before taking minors on trips. Do not administer medication of any kind without authorized written parental permission.
- 1.4.10 Adult participants are expected to refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages for the duration of the event, as well as during their travels to and from events.
- 1.4.11 Both adults and youth are expected to attend all activities with the entire group.
- 1.4.12 During all activities, especially a dance or other social event, chaperones should be available in the building where the activity takes place.
- 1.4.13 On any trip, information will be distributed to chaperones/supervisors for review with all participants to help familiarize them with the program schedule and layout of the facilities where event activities will take place. It is also a good time to be sure that the young people understand the importance of safety information.
- 1.4.14 A specific location must be designated where minors will be able to locate their chaperone/supervisor or where the group will meet at an agreed-upon time.
- 1.4.15 During overnight activities, chaperones/supervisors are responsible for establishing a curfew and for enforcing it.
- 1.4.16 Chaperones/supervisors must check rooms after curfew to make sure that young people are in their rooms and remain there.
- 1.4.17 Adults must not go anywhere during the event where the youth may not go with them (e.g., cocktail lounges, bars, etc.).



## **2. Sexual Conduct**

*Volunteers must not, for sexual gain or intimacy, exploit the trust placed in them by the faith community.*

- 2.1 Volunteers who are committed to a celibate lifestyle are called to be an example of celibate chastity in all relationships at all times.
- 2.2 Volunteers who provide pastoral counseling or spiritual direction services must avoid developing inappropriately intimate relationships with minors, other staff, or parishioners. Volunteers must behave in a professional manner at all times.
- 2.3 No volunteer may exploit another person for sexual purposes.
- 2.4 Allegations of sexual misconduct should be taken seriously and reported to the Vicar General or the Victim Assistance Coordinator, and to civil authorities if the situation involves a minor.

The Diocesan procedures will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.

- 2.5 Volunteers should review and know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for the state of Montana and should follow those mandates.

MT

**Agency:** Dept. of Public Health and Human Services

**Website:** [http://www.dphhs.state.mt.us/about\\_us/divisions/child\\_family\\_services/child\\_family\\_services.htm](http://www.dphhs.state.mt.us/about_us/divisions/child_family_services/child_family_services.htm)

**State Statutes:** [http://leg.state.mt.us/css/mtcode\\_const/laws.asp](http://leg.state.mt.us/css/mtcode_const/laws.asp)

**Statute Citation:** Mont. Code Ann. § 41-3-201

**Statute Link:** [Statute Link](#)

**Procedure:** Contact department

**Hotline:** 1-866-820-5437



### **3. Harassment**

*Volunteers must not engage in physical, psychological, written, or verbal harassment of staff, volunteers, or parishioners and must not tolerate such harassment by other Church staff or volunteers.*

- 3.1 Volunteers shall provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment.
- 3.2 Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, written, or verbal behavior, including without limitation the following:
  - Physical or mental abuse.
  - Racial insults.
  - Derogatory ethnic slurs.
  - Unwelcome sexual advances or touching.
  - Sexual comments or sexual jokes.
  - Requests for sexual favors used as:
    - a condition of employment, or
    - to affect other personnel decisions, such as promotion or compensation.
  - Display of offensive materials.
- 3.3 Harassment can be a single severe incident or a persistent pattern of behavior where the purpose or the effect is to create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating work environment.
- 3.4 Allegations of harassment should be taken seriously and reported immediately to the Vicar General.

Diocesan procedures will be followed to protect the rights of all involved.



#### **4. Conflicts of Interest**

*Volunteers should avoid situations that might present a conflict of interest. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call integrity and professional conduct into question.*

- 4.1 Volunteers should disclose all relevant factors that potentially could create a conflict of interest.
- 4.2 Volunteers should inform all parties when a real or potential conflict of interest arises. Resolution of the issues must protect the person receiving ministry services.
  - 4.2.1 No volunteer should take advantage of anyone to whom they are providing services in order to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.

#### **5. Reporting Ethical or Professional Misconduct**

*Volunteers have a duty to report their own ethical or professional misconduct and the misconduct of others.*

- 5.1 Volunteers must hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. When there is an indication of illegal actions by volunteers, you should notify the proper civil authorities immediately. Also notify the Vicar General.
- 5.2 When an uncertainty exists about whether a situation or course of conduct violates this *Code of Conduct* or other religious, moral, or ethical principles, consult with:
  - Peers,
  - Others knowledgeable about ethical issues, or
  - The Vicar General.
- 5.3 When it appears that a volunteer has violated this *Code of Conduct* or other religious, moral, or ethical principles:
  - Report the issue to a supervisor or next higher authority, or
  - Refer the matter directly to the Vicar General.



## **6. Administration**

*Volunteers shall treat employers, supervisors, clergy, and staff justly in the day-to-day administrative operations of their ministries.*

- 6.1 Personnel and other administrative decisions made by volunteers shall meet civil and canon law obligations and also reflect Catholic social teachings and this *Code of Conduct*.
- 6.2 No volunteer shall use his or her position to exercise unreasonable or inappropriate power and authority.
- 6.3 Each volunteer providing services to children and youth must read and sign the Volunteer Code of Conduct before providing services.

## **7. Volunteer Well-being**

*Volunteers have the duty to be responsible for their own spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional health.*

- 7.1 Volunteers should be aware of warning signs that indicate potential problems with their own spiritual, physical, mental, and/or emotional health.
- 7.2 Volunteers should seek help immediately whenever they notice behavioral or emotional warning signs in their own professional and/or personal lives.
- 7.3 Volunteers must address their own spiritual needs. Support from a Spiritual Director is highly recommended.
- 7.4 Inappropriate or illegal use of alcohol and drugs is prohibited.



**IV. Volunteer's Code of Conduct**

Our children are the most important gifts God has entrusted to us. As a volunteer, I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this Volunteer's Code of Conduct as a condition of my providing services to the children and youth of our Diocese.

**As a volunteer, I will:**

- Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with children and/or youth at Church activities.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition, or comparison when working with children and/or youth.
- Refuse to accept expensive gifts from children and/or youth or their parents without prior written approval from the pastor or administrator.
- Refrain from giving expensive gifts to children and/or youth without prior written approval from the parents or guardian and the pastor or administrator.
- Report suspected abuse to the pastor, administrator, or appropriate supervisor and the local Child Protection Services agency. I understand that failure to report suspected abuse to civil authorities is, according to the law, a misdemeanor.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children and/or youth.

**As a volunteer, I will not:**

- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children and/or youth.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while volunteering.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Pose any health risk to children and/or youth (i.e., no fevers or other contagious situations).
- Strike, spank, shake, or slap children and/or youth.
- Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade children and/or youth.
- Touch a child and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates children and/or youth.
- Use profanity in the presence of children and/or youth.

I understand that as a volunteer working with children and/or youth, I am subject to a thorough background check including criminal history. I understand that any action inconsistent with this Code of Conduct or failure to take action mandated by this Code of Conduct may result in my removal as a volunteer with children and/or youth.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parish/School and Town

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## **V. Contacting the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings**

To request information from the diocese on the Code of Pastoral Conduct, contact:

Rev. Jay H. Peterson, V.G.

Or

Sister Kathleen Kane, O.P., Victim Assistance Coordinator

Catholic Pastoral Center

P O Box 1399

Great Falls, MT 59403-1399

1-800-332-9998 toll-free in Montana

1-406-727-6683