

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR VOLUNTEERS
with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults
in the Diocese of New Ulm

February 9, 2011

By virtue of our Baptism, we share in the mission of the Church to continue the work of Jesus Christ – proclaiming the good news of God’s love and forgiveness, offering true praise and thanksgiving to the Father, and reaching out to all people, especially to the poor, the sick and the needy. We are called to be signs and instruments of God’s reign by communicating God’s saving love for all people, sacramentally celebrating God’s love, and witnessing to God’s love in daily life – in family life, work and recreation, education and cultural life, business and agriculture, parish and civic activity, works of mercy and justice.

Our call to discipleship is a grace and a responsibility. We are mindful of this when we assume positions of trust in our parishes. Our brothers and sisters, young and old, invite us into their lives, open their hearts, share their joys and hopes, their grief and anxieties with us. They are confident that we will listen compassionately and act honorably in their best interest. Because of this trust, our behavior, both public and private, has the potential to inspire them to faith and hope, and motivate them toward greater generosity and participation. Sadly, it may also scandalize them, weaken or destroy their faith, or increase their sense of isolation.

It is essential, therefore, that those who undertake service or ministry in the Church be constantly mindful of the trust they have been given. To faithfully discharge the responsibilities that accompany our work requires God’s grace, as well as our own prayerful reflection and principled behavior.

While the following guidelines for conduct are not exhaustive, they provide an ethical framework for all who minister and serve in the Church. It is expected that those who minister and serve will act in accord with these guidelines.

I will:

- Abide by the teachings and precepts of the Church and work to promote the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Respect the dignity and rights of others and relate with them without deception, manipulation, exploitation, harassment or intimidation. Treat others with integrity, respect, patience, kindness and consideration.
- Protect children, youth and vulnerable adults from abuse or neglect; report uncontrollable or unusual behavior of children, youth and vulnerable adults to their parents or guardian(s); report incidents of abuse or neglect of children, youth and vulnerable adults to the proper authorities; cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse.

I will not:

- Use profanity in the presence of children, youth and vulnerable adults, or speak to them in a manner that is derogatory, demeaning, humiliating or threatening.
- Strike, spank, shake or slap children, youth and vulnerable adults (no form of physical discipline is acceptable including physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behavior, except as may be needed to restrain them from inflicting harm on themselves or others).
- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children, youth and vulnerable adults, or pose any health risk to those entrusted to my care.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while working with children, youth and vulnerable adults.
- Possess any sexually explicit or morally inappropriate materials on church property or in the presence of children, youth and vulnerable adults (such materials include, but are not limited to, inappropriate printed materials, magazines, videos, films, recordings, computer games/software). In addition, I will not engage children, youth and vulnerable adults in conversation, discussion, personal interaction or entertainment that I would have reservations about in the presence of their parents or a responsible adult.
- Engage in any sexually oriented conversations or discussions with children, youth and vulnerable adults, or discuss my own sexual activities with them. (Diocesan approved curriculum for Catholic schools or religious education may address issues of human sexuality, especially for teenagers who may have questions related to dating and sex before marriage. These occasions are an opportunity to present the Church's teaching in a positive way. Questions that go beyond the scope of the lesson plan should be referred to parents or guardians.)
- Touch or otherwise relate with children, youth and vulnerable adults in a sexual or inappropriate manner.
- Provide transportation for children, youth or vulnerable adults without a second adult present in the vehicle and without written permission of a parent/guardian. They are to be transported directly to their destination, with no unauthorized stops, by drivers who are validly licensed and insured.
- Go on overnight trips alone with a minor who is not a member of my immediate family.
- Take photos or make recordings or drawings of minors while they are unclothed or dressing.
- *Apart from emergencies*, provide overnight accommodations in personal residences for minors.
- Release children, youth or vulnerable adults at the close of activities to anyone other than parents, legal guardians or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians in writing.
- Accept or give gifts which are inappropriate or pose a conflict of interest.