



Diocese of Palm Beach

***CODE OF PASTORAL CONDUCT
FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS OF THE
DIOCESE OF PALM BEACH AT THE
PARISHES, SCHOOLS, PASTORAL
CENTER AND AFFILIATED
ORGANIZATIONS***

No. I-2026

Particular Law: Protecting and Safeguarding the People of God/7 August 2026

Article 1

Purpose and Scope

§1. This Code of Pastoral Conduct applies to all persons who provide volunteer services on behalf of the Diocese of Palm Beach or any parish, school, institution, ministry, program, agency, or affiliated entity under its ecclesiastical authority.

§2. For purposes of this Code, the term “volunteer” means any person who, without being an employee or cleric acting by virtue of ecclesiastical office or assignment, freely provides services or participates in ministry on behalf of a diocesan entity.

§3. Volunteers shall comply with this Code together with all applicable diocesan policies, safe-environment requirements, particular law, and applicable civil law.

§4. Volunteers who work with minors or vulnerable persons shall satisfy all screening, background-check, training, certification, and other safe-environment requirements established by the Diocese before beginning such service and shall maintain such requirements throughout their volunteer service.

§5. Volunteer service within the Diocese is a privilege and an ecclesial responsibility. Nothing in this Code creates a contractual right to serve as a volunteer or a right to continued volunteer service.

Article 2

General Standards of Christian Conduct

§1. Volunteers shall conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the teachings, moral principles, and mission of the Catholic Church.

§2. Volunteers shall treat clergy, religious, employees, other volunteers, parishioners, students, parents, minors, vulnerable persons, visitors, and all other persons with respect, patience, courtesy, charity, and dignity.

§3. Volunteers shall respect the inherent dignity of every human person and shall refrain from harassment, intimidation, bullying, humiliation, discrimination, retaliation, exploitation, or abusive behavior.

§4. Volunteers shall work cooperatively with pastors, administrators, principals, supervisors, employees, clergy, and others responsible for the ministry or activity in which they serve.

§5. Volunteers shall respect the legitimate ecclesiastical authority and administrative structure of the Diocese and of the particular parish, school, institution, ministry, or agency in which they serve.

§6. Volunteers shall perform only those duties entrusted or authorized to them and shall comply with reasonable instructions issued by the competent pastor, administrator, principal, supervisor, or other diocesan authority.

§7. Volunteers shall not use their position, ministry, access, influence, or relationship of trust for personal, financial, sexual, political, or other improper advantage.

Article 3

Safeguarding of Minors and Vulnerable Persons

§1. The protection of minors and vulnerable persons is a fundamental obligation of every volunteer serving within the Diocese of Palm Beach.

§2. Volunteers shall maintain appropriate physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and behavioral boundaries with minors and vulnerable persons at all times.

§3. Volunteers shall avoid isolated, secret, or unobservable one-on-one interactions with minors in connection with diocesan, parish, school, or ministerial activities.

§4. Activities involving minors shall, insofar as reasonably possible, occur in locations that are observable, interruptible, and accessible to other authorized adults.

§5. Volunteers shall never engage in grooming behavior or cultivate an inappropriate exclusive, secretive, dependent, manipulative, or emotionally intimate relationship with a minor or vulnerable person.

§6. Volunteers shall not encourage minors to keep secrets from their parents or legal guardians, clergy, teachers, supervisors, or other responsible adults.

§7. Volunteers shall not share inappropriate personal, romantic, sexual, or intimate information with minors or solicit such information from them.

§8. Volunteers shall immediately take appropriate action whenever they observe a minor or vulnerable person in a location, situation, or circumstance that presents a reasonable safeguarding concern.

§9. Volunteers shall participate in all safe-environment training and continuing education required by the Diocese.

Article 4

Physical Contact and Discipline

§1. Physical contact with minors or vulnerable persons shall always be nonsexual, appropriate to the circumstances, public, and consistent with the person's age, developmental needs, and legitimate pastoral or educational purpose.

§2. Volunteers shall never touch a minor or vulnerable person in a sexual, sexually suggestive, intimate, coercive, violent, or otherwise inappropriate manner.

§3. Corporal punishment is prohibited. Volunteers shall not strike, slap, spank, shake, pinch, push, restrain, or otherwise inflict physical punishment upon a minor, except for reasonable and proportionate physical intervention when immediately necessary to prevent serious harm to the minor or another person.

§4. Volunteers shall not use discipline that humiliates, degrades, threatens, terrorizes, ridicules, or intentionally frightens a minor.

§5. Positive reinforcement, appropriate instruction, and constructive correction shall be used when working with minors.

Article 5

Sexual Conduct, Harassment, and Pornography

§1. Volunteers shall not engage in sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, or sexually inappropriate behavior in connection with their volunteer service.

§2. Any sexual activity or sexualized conduct involving a minor is absolutely prohibited.

§3. Volunteers shall not make sexually suggestive comments, jokes, gestures, propositions, or communications.

§4. Volunteers shall not possess, distribute, produce, acquire, display, transmit, access, or intentionally view pornography while engaged in volunteer service or while using diocesan property, equipment, networks, accounts, or electronic systems.

§5. Volunteers shall never expose a minor to pornography, sexually explicit material, or other material inappropriate for minors, nor shall they assist, encourage, or permit a minor to access such material.

§6. Any apparent child sexual abuse material encountered in the course of volunteer service shall be handled strictly in accordance with applicable law and diocesan reporting procedures and shall not be copied, forwarded, downloaded, or redistributed except as expressly directed by competent civil authorities.

Article 6

Electronic Communications and Social Media

§1. Electronic communications with minors arising from volunteer service shall be limited to legitimate parish, school, diocesan, educational, or ministerial purposes.

§2. Such communications shall be transparent, appropriate, and conducted through methods authorized by the Diocese or the particular diocesan entity.

§3. Volunteers shall not engage in secret, inappropriate, romantic, sexual, or excessively personal electronic communications with minors.

§4. Volunteers shall not use disappearing-message functions, anonymous accounts, secret accounts, or other means intended to conceal communications with minors arising from their volunteer service.

§5. Volunteers shall not send or request inappropriate photographs, videos, recordings, messages, or other digital content involving minors.

§6. Volunteers shall not use diocesan electronic systems, devices, accounts, networks, or internet access for unlawful, immoral, sexually explicit, fraudulent, harassing, or otherwise inappropriate purposes.

§7. Volunteers shall have no expectation of privacy when using electronic systems, devices, accounts, or networks owned, maintained, or provided by the Diocese or one of its entities, subject to applicable law.

Article 7

Photography, Video, and Use of Images

§1. Volunteers shall photograph, film, record, publish, transmit, or post images of minors only for legitimate parish, school, diocesan, or ministerial purposes and in accordance with diocesan policies.

§2. Required parental or legal-guardian consent shall be obtained before photographs, videos, recordings, or identifying information concerning minors are publicly distributed or posted.

§3. Volunteers shall not create or maintain private collections of photographs or recordings of minors obtained through their volunteer service for purposes unrelated to the authorized ministry or activity.

§4. Photographs or recordings shall never depict minors in circumstances that are undignified, sexually suggestive, exploitative, unnecessarily revealing, or otherwise inappropriate.

Article 8

Transportation, Trips, and Off-Site Activities

§1. Volunteers shall not transport minors in connection with diocesan activities except as authorized by the competent parish, school, or diocesan authority and in accordance with applicable diocesan policies.

§2. No volunteer shall take a minor on a trip, excursion, overnight activity, or other off-site activity without all required parental or legal-guardian consent and the authorization required by diocesan policy.

§3. Appropriate adult supervision shall be maintained during activities involving minors.

§4. Volunteers shall comply with all applicable transportation, vehicle, insurance, supervision, lodging, and safe-environment requirements established by the Diocese.

§5. Volunteers shall not share a bed with a minor or otherwise arrange sleeping accommodations inconsistent with diocesan safe-environment requirements.

Article 9

Alcohol, Drugs, and Impairment

§1. Volunteers shall not use, possess, distribute, provide, or be under the influence of illegal drugs while engaged in volunteer service or participating in diocesan activities.

§2. Volunteers shall not provide alcohol, tobacco, nicotine products, illegal drugs, controlled substances, or other prohibited substances to minors.

§3. Volunteers shall not consume alcohol while supervising minors or report for volunteer service while impaired by alcohol, drugs, medication, or any other substance in a manner that compromises judgment, safety, or the proper performance of their responsibilities.

§4. Nothing in this Article prohibits the lawful and appropriate consumption of sacramental wine in the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy.

§1. Volunteers are absolutely forbidden to consume alcohol during regular duty hours.

§2. Volunteers must not consume drugs, especially those which may impair their ministerial service.

Article 10

Gifts, Favoritism, and Financial Boundaries

§1. Volunteers shall avoid favoritism and shall not cultivate exclusive relationships with individual minors that could reasonably be perceived as inappropriate.

§2. Volunteers shall not give extravagant, secret, sexually suggestive, or otherwise inappropriate gifts to minors.

§3. Volunteers shall not accept expensive or disproportionate gifts from minors, vulnerable persons, or their families when the gift could create an inappropriate obligation, dependency, appearance of favoritism, or conflict of interest.

§4. When uncertainty exists concerning the appropriateness of a gift, the volunteer shall consult the competent pastor, administrator, principal, or supervisor before accepting or giving it.

§5. Volunteers shall not borrow money from, lend money to, solicit personal financial assistance from, or otherwise exploit persons whom they serve through their volunteer ministry.

Article 11

Confidentiality and Privacy

§1. Volunteers may acquire confidential, sensitive, pastoral, educational, financial, medical, personnel, or other private information through their service. Such information shall be protected and used only for legitimate purposes associated with the volunteer's authorized responsibilities.

§2. Volunteers shall not disclose confidential information except when authorized, when legitimately required in the performance of their duties, or when disclosure is required by ecclesiastical or civil law.

§3. Confidentiality shall never be invoked to conceal abuse, misconduct, criminal behavior, a safeguarding concern, or any matter that must be reported under law or diocesan policy.

§4. Volunteers shall respect the privacy of clergy, employees, parishioners, students, families, other volunteers, and persons receiving pastoral or charitable assistance.

Article 12

Use of Diocesan Property and Resources

§1. Volunteers shall use diocesan, parish, school, or agency property, funds, equipment, vehicles, electronic systems, records, and other resources only for authorized purposes.

§2. Theft, fraud, misappropriation, unauthorized use, destruction, falsification of records, or other misuse of ecclesiastical goods or property is prohibited.

§3. Volunteers shall comply with all reasonable security, technology, financial-control, and records-management requirements applicable to their volunteer responsibilities.

§4. Volunteers shall not obstruct or interfere with an authorized inspection, audit, review, preservation, or lawful access to diocesan property, records, devices, accounts, or electronic systems.

Article 13

Duty to Report

§1. Volunteers shall comply fully with all reporting obligations imposed by applicable civil law and diocesan policy.

§2. Any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a minor or vulnerable person has been abused, neglected, exploited, or otherwise subjected to conduct requiring a report under civil law shall make the required report promptly to the competent civil authorities.

§3. Reporting a matter internally to a pastor, supervisor, school official, diocesan office, or other ecclesiastical authority does not replace a report to civil authorities whenever such a report is required by law.

§4. Volunteers shall also promptly report suspected sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, financial malfeasance, serious violations of this Code, or other serious misconduct by clergy, employees, volunteers, or other ecclesiastical agents through the reporting mechanisms established by the Diocese of Palm Beach.

§5. In an emergency or whenever a person is in immediate danger, volunteers shall contact emergency services or the appropriate law-enforcement authority without delay.

§6. No volunteer shall attempt personally to investigate an allegation of abuse or misconduct unless specifically authorized to do so. The volunteer's responsibility is to report the concern truthfully and promptly and to preserve any relevant information or evidence.

§7. No person shall knowingly make a false or malicious allegation. This provision shall never be interpreted to discourage good-faith reports, including reports that ultimately cannot be substantiated.

Article 14

Cooperation with Investigations

§1. Volunteers shall cooperate truthfully and fully with legitimate investigations, audits, reviews, or inquiries conducted or authorized by the Diocese or by competent civil authorities.

§2. Volunteers shall not destroy, alter, conceal, fabricate, or improperly remove records, communications, electronic information, photographs, documents, or other evidence relevant to an investigation.

§3. Volunteers shall not intimidate, pressure, coach, threaten, retaliate against, or improperly influence any complainant, alleged victim, witness, investigator, or other person participating in an investigation.

§4. Volunteers shall respect any confidentiality requirements legitimately imposed during an investigation, without prejudice to rights and obligations established by civil or ecclesiastical law.

Article 15

Non-Retaliation

§1. Retaliation against a person who, in good faith, reports suspected abuse, misconduct, unlawful behavior, or a violation of diocesan policy is strictly prohibited.

§2. Retaliation against a person for cooperating with an investigation or providing truthful information to competent authorities is likewise prohibited.

§3. Any volunteer who believes that retaliation has occurred shall promptly report the matter to the appropriate diocesan authority.

Article 16

Conflicts of Interest and Integrity of Ministry

§1. Volunteers shall avoid circumstances in which personal, family, business, financial, or other interests improperly interfere, or reasonably appear to interfere, with their responsibilities to the Church.

§2. Volunteers shall disclose to the competent supervisor any actual or potential conflict of interest relevant to their volunteer responsibilities.

§3. A volunteer shall not use a diocesan ministry, parish, school, program, mailing list, database, facility, or relationship for unauthorized commercial solicitation, personal financial benefit, political campaigning, or other purposes unrelated to the ecclesial mission for which access was granted.

Article 17

Violations of this Code

§1. Every volunteer is personally responsible for understanding and observing this Code and all policies applicable to his or her particular ministry.

§2. A violation of this Code may result in corrective measures, restriction or suspension of volunteer activities, removal from a particular ministry, or termination of all volunteer service within the Diocese, according to the nature and gravity of the conduct.

§3. When appropriate, conduct may also be reported to civil authorities or other competent authorities.

§4. The Diocese reserves the right to restrict, suspend, or terminate volunteer service whenever it determines that such action is reasonably necessary for the protection of persons, the integrity of ecclesiastical ministry, or the common good of the Church.

§5. A volunteer may be temporarily removed or restricted from ministry while an allegation or safeguarding concern is being evaluated. Such precautionary action does not, in itself, constitute a determination of wrongdoing.

Article 18

Acknowledgment and Acceptance

§1. Every volunteer required by diocesan policy to receive this Code shall acknowledge that he or she has received, read, understood, and agrees to comply with it.

§2. Such acknowledgment may be made electronically or by signing the form prescribed by the Diocese.

§3. When required, acknowledgment and completion of applicable safe-environment requirements shall occur before the volunteer begins service.

§4. By accepting volunteer service within the Diocese of Palm Beach, the volunteer acknowledges that service in the Church requires conduct consistent with the dignity of the ecclesial mission and agrees to observe the standards established by this Code.

Article 19

Virtus Training

§1. Every volunteer required by diocesan policy to observe the norms and provisions of this Code shall commit to undergo *Virtus Training* and to comply regularly with all *Virtus Training* activities and follow-up procedures and duties. Negligence or violation of this norm shall be subject to immediate suspension to be imposed by the competent authority.