



CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CLERGY, VOLUNTEERS, AND EMPLOYEES CHALDEAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE OF THE USA

Updated July of 2025

Volunteering is a grace from God, and volunteers are a vital part of the Church's mission. The Pope Francis has reminded us that volunteers bring strength to the Church through their selfless service. However, it's crucial that we protect our children and vulnerable adults. To ensure their safety and well-being, all volunteers must follow this Code of Conduct.

This Code of Conduct applies to volunteers, clergy, and consecrated religious who interact with minors (any person under the age of 18) and vulnerable adults (any adult with physical, mental, or emotional limitations). As a volunteer, you carry a major responsibility. Your role demands that you maintain high standards of conduct both in your volunteer capacity and in your personal life.

By volunteering, you agree to follow all the rules and responsibilities outlined below.

1. FOLLOW ALL SAFETY GUIDELINES AND REPORT CONCERNS

All volunteers must read and follow the diocesan rules for protecting children and vulnerable adults. If you suspect any inappropriate behavior (physical, emotional, sexual abuse) report it immediately to your pastor, principal, or the Diocesan Director of Safe Environs at pgc@chaldeanchurch.org.

2. MAINTAIN BOUNDARIES AND AVOID INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

Always maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries with minors and vulnerable adults. Avoid any behavior that could be misunderstood or harmful.

3. ACT WITH A HIGHER MORAL STANDARD: BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

As a volunteer of the Church, you are expected to uphold a higher standard of personal integrity and moral conduct. This responsibility extends beyond your role within the Church and applies equally to your behavior in your personal and public life.

Your actions, language, and choices should reflect the values of the Church at all times, as your conduct reflects not only you as an individual, but also on the Church as a whole. As someone entrusted with the care and influence of children, youth, and vulnerable adults, you carry a sacred responsibility to act with respect, humility, and accountability.

This includes:

- Maintaining healthy boundaries in all relationships.
- Refraining from behavior that could cause harm, offense, or scandal.
- Being a role model in speech, conduct, and online presence.
- Immediately reporting any behavior that compromises the safety or dignity of others.

4. DO NOT ENGAGE IN ANY INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT

Never engage in inappropriate conduct with minors or vulnerable adults, no matter who initiates it. Violations of this code will lead to consequences, which may include criminal investigation and dismissal from volunteer work.

5. KEEP PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS SEPARATE FROM VOLUNTEER WORK

Do not form personal relationships with minors or vulnerable adults you interact with in your volunteer role, even if they initiate it. This includes:

- **No Inappropriate Touching:** Never touch a minor or vulnerable adult in a sexual or inappropriate manner (e.g., pinching, tickling, rubbing, massaging).
- **No Being Alone:** Do not be alone in a private space with a minor or vulnerable adult (e.g., bedrooms, rectories).
- **No Overnight Trips:** Do not take minors or vulnerable adults on overnight trips without another adult present.
- **No Sexual Material:** Do not acquire or share any sexual material with minors or vulnerable adults.
- **Avoid Inappropriate Content:** Never introduce sexually explicit jokes, music, films, or games to minors or vulnerable adults unless approved by the Diocese.
- **No Drugs or Alcohol:** Do not provide minors or vulnerable adults with alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, or controlled substances. Never use drugs or alcohol when working with them.
- **No Physical Discipline:** Do not use physical punishment to correct behavior.
- **No Humiliation or Profanity:** Never humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or use profanity in front of minors or vulnerable adults.

6. MEASURES TO KEEP EVERYONE SAFE

- **Report Suspected Abuse:**
Always report any suspected abuse to the proper authorities.
- **Limit Physical Contact:**
Avoid unnecessary physical contact with minors or vulnerable adults, especially in private settings.
- **Avoid Expensive Gifts:**
Do not buy expensive gifts for minors or vulnerable adults without the approval of a parent or guardian.
- **Supervision:**
Always have at least two adults present when working with minors or vulnerable adults. Ensure that no one is left unattended after events.
- **Avoid Private Spaces:**
Never meet minors or vulnerable adults in private, closed rooms. Keep doors open when meeting with them.

7. BE CAREFUL WITH AFFECTION AND TOUCHING

Acceptable affection:

Affection in ministry should always be appropriate and respectful. The following are generally acceptable when initiated by the minor or vulnerable adult:

- Verbal praise, brief pats on the shoulder or back.
- Handshakes, high-fives, fist bumps.
- Brief hugs, holding hands during prayer or while walking.

Unacceptable Affection:

Do not engage in the following:

- Long embraces or kisses.
- Holding minors over four years old on the lap.
- Touching private areas (e.g., buttocks, chest, genital areas).
- Being in private, secluded spaces with minors or vulnerable adults.
- Wrestling, tickling, or piggyback rides.

8. ENSURE PROPER DOCUMENTATION AND PERMISSION

Permission Slips:

Always obtain written consent from parents or guardians before taking minors or vulnerable adults on field trips or special activities. Ensure that permission slips include clear details (location, times, emergency contacts).

No Unauthorized Photos:

Never take photos or videos of minors or vulnerable adults without the written consent of their parents or guardians.

9. BE PREPARED FOR BACKGROUND CHECKS AND TRAINING

Background Check & Training:

All volunteers must undergo a thorough background check and attend a **PGC (Protecting God's Children)** workshop. These steps help ensure that volunteers are properly trained to work with minors and vulnerable adults.

10. CONSEQUENCES FOR VIOLATIONS

If you fail to follow this Code of Conduct or engage in behavior that puts minors or vulnerable adults at risk, you may be removed from volunteer work. This could also include legal action, depending on the severity of the violation.

By signing below, you confirm that you have read and agreed to abide by the Code of Conduct of the Chaldean Diocese of St. Thomas the Apostle and hereby give your consent to undergo any necessary background checks for this purpose.

Name

Date

Signature