

STANDARDS FOR VOUNTEERS AND EMPLOYEES IN MINISTRY



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CONTENTS:

- Page 1. Bishops' Statement
- Page 4. Code of Ethics for Church Employees and Volunteers
- Page 6. Standards for Volunteers and Employees in Ministry
- Page 11. Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers and Employees
- Page 13. Consent to Disclosure of Information (Police Vetting Form)

BISHOPS STATEMENT

Those who do ministry, administrative and voluntary work for the Church are in fact seen as officially representing the Church. All 'workers' whether paid or unpaid – minister, volunteer, or employee – need to understand that their words and actions will always be seen as being done by people who work in the name of the Church.

It is important therefore, that all Church workers know what the Church's mission and way of life is; as a community of love, committed to the praise of God and to the healing of division of any kind. Equally important, is the understanding that any serious breach of these Standards would do harm to the people they work with, to themselves and to the Church community.

It is readily acknowledged that volunteers, ministers, and employees give their time, expertise, and skills, willingly. These services are very much appreciated and vital to the life of the Church. However, because they represent the Church, there is a need to have guidelines for the way in which they perform their services. These Standards therefore are seen as being in place for the protection of the "worker", the Church and those for whom they are providing their services.

This document has been prepared by the National Office for Professional Standards in consultation with the National Professional Standards Committee. Wider consultation has also taken place both within the Church and in the wider society. This document sets out in writing what is expected of those who work in Church ministry settings. It is based on and builds on the National Code of Ethics for Church Volunteers promulgated by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference in 2003.

Work which is substandard and inconsistent, unacceptable behaviour and unreliability all reflect badly on the Church and on specific ministry groups. It is necessary therefore that we all attempt to the best of our ability to live and work by these principles and guidelines for the good of all.

The basis of all our work is the Gospel and the living tradition (cf. Paragraph 29 *Novo Millennio Ineunte*). For us, our calling is always into relationship with God – Father, Son and Spirit – and with our neighbour. These relationships infer responsibility for the promotion of human dignity and for the pursuit of a Church that draws all humankind into the continuing work of God amongst us. It is our hope that this document, STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERS AND EMPLOYEES IN MINISTRY, is another step along the road towards supporting, informing and ensuring these relationships.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by 'ohn A. Dew'.

Most Reverend John A Dew DD
† Archbishop of Wellington
on behalf of Bishops' Conference
and Congregational Leaders

Code of Ethics for Church Employees and Volunteers

Volunteers and employees are to be personally accountable for their decisions and actions in order to create a safe and supportive environment in working for the Church.

Volunteers and employees are to be honest and trustworthy in all matters.

Volunteers and employees are expected to ensure that all people understand the services offered and the nature and purposes of those services.

The Church respects the rights of all people to privacy and confidentiality. Confidential information should be shared with others only with the informed consent of the person, unless there is clear danger to their life, to others, or to the public at large.

Church volunteers and employees will treat all with whom they come in contact - regardless of race, gender, age, national origin, religion, political or other opinion, sexual orientation, status, health, intelligence or any other differentiating character - with respect and courtesy.

Church volunteers and employees shall avoid all behaviour that could reasonably be interpreted as harassment. Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical or verbal behaviour, including but not limited to: physical or psychological abuse, racial insults, derogatory ethnic slurs, unwelcome touching or sexual advance, and sexual jokes or comments. Harassment can occur as a result of a single incident or a pattern of behaviour where the purpose or effect is to create a hostile, offensive or intimidating environment.

Volunteers and employees are not to access websites which are pornographic or to use email material which is inappropriate and inconsistent with the behaviour required of a Church worker.

Volunteers and employees shall not engage in any sexual activity with any person where there is a power differential or make any sexual

advances verbally, physically or by innuendo. It is the volunteer's and employee's responsibility to maintain appropriate boundaries.

Volunteers and employees have a responsibility to take all allegations of sexual abuse seriously. They should not attempt to assess or investigate any such allegations, but will document them and follow the appropriate diocesan procedures.

Volunteers and employees should avoid any activities, whether connected with their position or otherwise, which would compromise their integrity, and/or bring their message, the people they work with, their colleagues or the wider Church community into disrepute.

At all times volunteers and employees will conduct themselves in a manner, which ensures that all people are supported, and empowered through the services they provide.

Volunteers and employees have a responsibility to recognize their strengths and limitations. This ensures that they know how their decisions and actions affect the people they work with.

Volunteers and employees will honour the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi in their work and endeavour to be culturally sensitive to all people they engage with and avoid imposing mono-cultural values.

Volunteers and employees will offer only services that come within their competence, qualifications and mandate. They will refer matters outside of these areas to the appropriate body.

If volunteers or employees consider that their mandate requires more expertise than they have, they will inform the appropriate body of their need for training or ask for a change in the tasks they are asked to perform.

Volunteers and employees will seek regular supervision which will provide them with an avenue to talk through issues and seek advice.

Volunteers and employees are accountable to the New Zealand judicial system.

STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERS AND EMPLOYEES IN MINISTRY

Guidelines

1. This document relates to people involved with ministry for the Church with particular emphasis on ministry to children, youth and vulnerable adults.

2. CHILDREN

In all situations where volunteers or employees are involved in contact with children, there is a risk that the volunteers/employees may abuse that relationship. Therefore, the parish or ministry leader should always assess the level of potential risk of abuse or other danger. The level of risk should determine the measures to be taken to ensure the safety of children.

(a) Low level of potential risk

(for example, a crèche which is held during a church service in an open area with a number of helpers including parents and other suitable volunteers)

Suitable procedures must include:

- parents to be consulted regularly to ensure they feel secure in the way their children are supervised. Parents' requests should be respected, for example, as to whether they prefer to take their own children to the toilet or are they happy for a helper to assist.

- volunteers should all be approved and rostered. The system should not be open to any-one else (other than parents helping with their own children) joining the crèche supervising team without approval.
- volunteers should be well known to the parish or ministry leadership (either personally or by reputation) as people who are suitable to work with children.
- training should be provided (this may not always be possible prior to each new volunteer commencing in the activity, but should be available as soon as practical)

Topics include:

- all aspects of minimising the risk of any harm to children
- alertness to the possibility of abuse
- introduction to the “code of ethics for volunteers and employees”

(b) High level of potential risk

(for example, counselling vulnerable children on a one-to-one basis, or overnight activity such as weekend camps, activity involving regular contact with children).

Suitable procedures must include:

Vetting

- the volunteer or person seeking employment must complete an application form including agreement to a police check.
- two referees must be nominated.
- the referees to be interviewed (in person or by telephone) to establish whether or not the person is suitable to work with children.
- conduct police check by forwarding signed form to a local or national church office which has police approval for vetting; one such office is (National Office for Professional Standards, P O Box 12265, Thorndon, Wellington 6144). Vetting can only be carried out with the consent of the applicant given on the correct form "consent to Disclosure of Information."
- Strict confidentiality in relation to police checks must be observed between NOPS or other approved office and the parish or ministry leaders.

Training

Training to be provided as soon as possible. This creates a further opportunity to become acquainted more fully with the person.

Topics include:

- all aspects of minimising the risk of any harm to children
- alertness to the possibility of abuse
- not to be alone with a child out of sight of another adult
- not to take a child away in a vehicle or to another location except in an emergency.
- logging any incident (assistance with toileting, first aid etc)
- ensuring parents' wishes are respected
- harmful effects of sexual, emotional or physical abuse
- introduction to the "code of ethics for church volunteers and employees"

Follow-up training

As far as possible, some follow-up training for volunteers should be conducted to include feed-back from the volunteers and group discussion on the experience (positive and negative) of volunteering, and recommendations.

3. ACTIVITIES WITH YOUTH

Any volunteer or employee who is planning any activity with youth and young people away from the church is required to prepare and process appropriate consent forms, medical information, risk analysis and management system (RAMS) forms as an obligation.

(For further information, consultation with the Diocesan Youth Advisor is required to obtain the necessary forms and other vital information in order to provide maximum protection for youth and young people and those who minister to them.)

4. WRITTEN EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENTS

If the role of an employee involves interaction with children or young people, it would be useful if the applicable employment agreement contained a provision which said:

“Any offer of employment and the continuation of that employment is dependent on the following:

- the employee completing and providing to the employer a written agreement confirming the employee's consent to the employer obtaining a police check on him or her.
- the nomination by the employee of two referees and the successful checking of references.
- the successful obtaining of a police clearance.”

The Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers and Employees

Volunteers and Employees have the right to:

- receive a clear description of the role they will carry out and how the role fits into the functions of the organisation
- be informed as to whom they will report
- receive adequate training and supervision
- have opportunities to contribute to policy and decision making in areas for which they are volunteering or are employed
- support from the parish or ministry to assist them to carry out their role in a rewarding way
- be informed about the complaints resolution process – whom do they inform to resolve difficulties
- have positive and successful work experiences

Volunteers and Employees have a responsibility to:

- be committed to carry out the task agreed to
- always notify a team leader if they are unable to carry out a rostered or agreed task
- cooperate with staff and other volunteers
- maintain confidentiality
- undertake training as required
- maintain ethical standards

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**CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF
INFORMATION**

Licensing & Vetting Service Centre
Police National Headquarters
P O Box 3017
WELLINGTON 6140

I
(Surname) (First Names)

.....Sex (M/F)
(Maiden name or any other names used)

Place of birth

Date of birth.....Nationality.....

Residential Address

Suburb.....City

NZ Driver Licence number

Note - Form Continued over page

. . . do hereby consent to the disclosure to the Catholic Church of New Zealand by the New Zealand Police of any information they may have pursuant to this application. I understand that any record of criminal convictions I might have will automatically be concealed if I meet the eligibility criteria stipulated in Section 7 of the Criminal Records (Clean State) Act 2004.

Signed

Date.....

COMMENTS OF THE NEW ZEALAND POLICE