

St Patrick Catholic Church

Safe Environment

Teen Volunteer Handbook

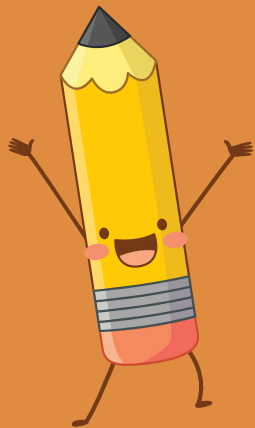


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Why We Need You



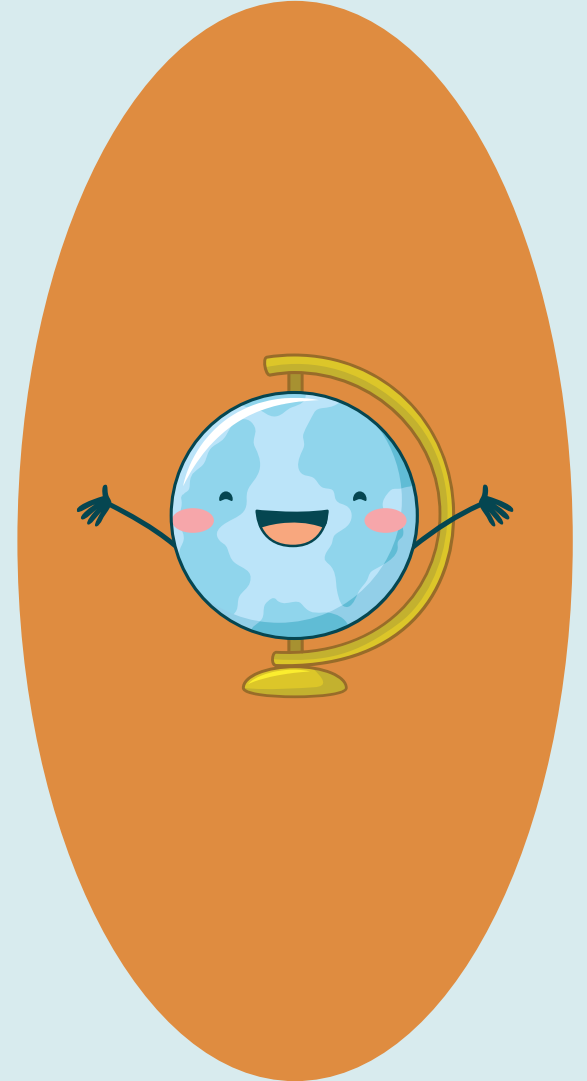
- As Catholics, we know that Jesus commanded us to love and serve one another. He taught us that whatever we did in his name, we did for Him.
- You are called! You are needed! You matter!
- We also know that God has blessed each of us with many talents and gifts that He expects us to share with others.
- Without you and others like you sharing their gifts, we could not offer these programs
- You are the future of the church!

Why Safe Environment?

When we serve others, we need to make sure we understand the responsibility that goes along with serving them. To help with this, the Catholic Church has developed a program called “Safe Environment” to make sure that all volunteers, staff and clergy know how to work with children and vulnerable adults to ensure their safety and well-being while they are participating in church activities.

For Teen Volunteers, Safe Environment Training provides guidelines for safety when:

- **Working with Children**
- **Working alongside Adults**
- **You are serving the church in other ways such as Ushering at Mass or Altar Serving**
- **What to do if you see or hear something of concern**



Safe Environment Processes

To be considered “CLEARED” to serve, the volunteer must have completed all steps below appropriate for their age

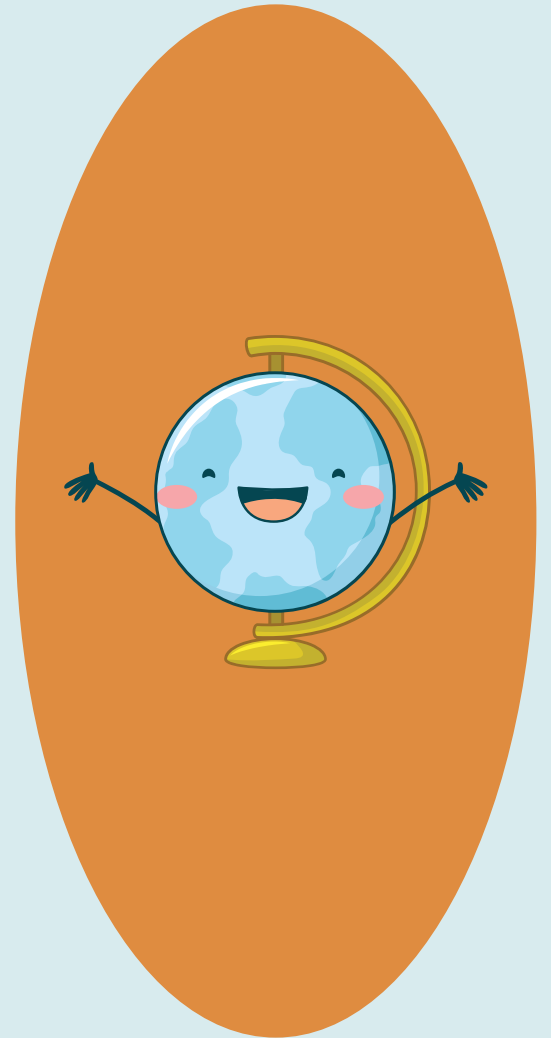
For adults (age 18 and over), they have 4 steps:

- Personal Reference Check (2 references minimum)
- Criminal Background Check every 2 years
- Complete 1 Training Class each year
- In-Person Interview with the church Safe Environment Office

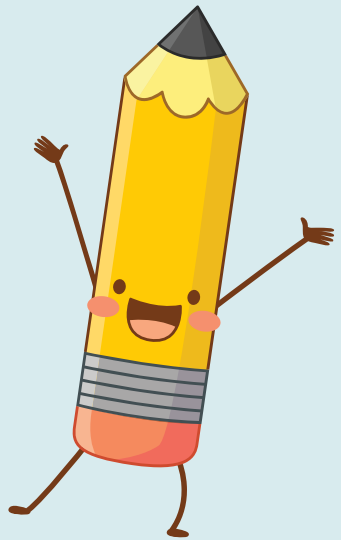
Teens (age 13-17)

- Complete a Teen Volunteer Training Class when asked to do so
- Sign the Teen Handbook Acknowledgement each year
- Provide a picture for a volunteer badge
- Notify the Safe Environment Office when you are turning 18

Volunteers who do not complete all steps listed and who do not maintain their “CLEARED” status will not be allowed to volunteer.

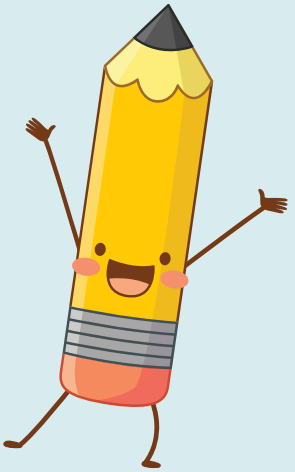


General Guidelines for Teen Volunteers



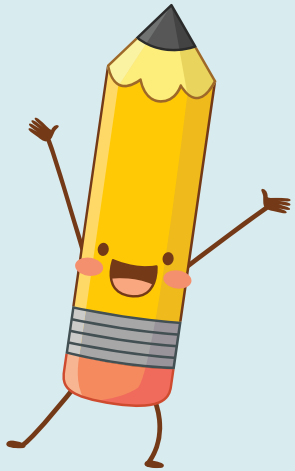
- Be on time and ready to help with a joyful attitude. Let someone know if you cannot be there at your scheduled time.
- Check in with the supervising adult when you arrive and before you leave.
- Dress appropriately for the activity (modest dress, no crop tops, shorts visible, skirts below knees, no offensive graphics or words on clothing).
- Cell phone use is not permitted when volunteering. You may have your phone in your pocket, but it must remain there and be turned off (or have volume down). If you need to use your phone, ask permission to step away for a moment.
- You should never be left alone with children or left on your own without an adult leader when serving at Mass.
- Report anything that concerns you or makes you feel uncomfortable to a trusted adult, staff member or to the church Safe Environment Office. An adult leader or staff member can help you make a report.

Special Guidelines for Working with Children



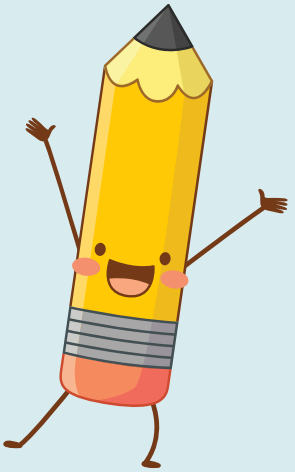
- There should always be 2 cleared adults present when working with children. Teen aides **do not** count as a cleared adult.
- Parents should not ask you to watch their children without 2 cleared adults present. It is okay to say that they cannot leave their children with you.
- You should not be asked to take children to the bathroom without an adult.
- If working in the Nursery, you should not be asked to change diapers.
- You should not discipline a child on your own. Let an adult leader handle that.
- Do not take photos or videos of children. Only authorized church staff or other authorized adults should do that.
- All safety incidents must be reported to a supervising adult or church staff even if there appears to be no injury.
- Remember that children need praise and positive communication. You are role models for children younger than you.

Special Guidelines for Working with Children



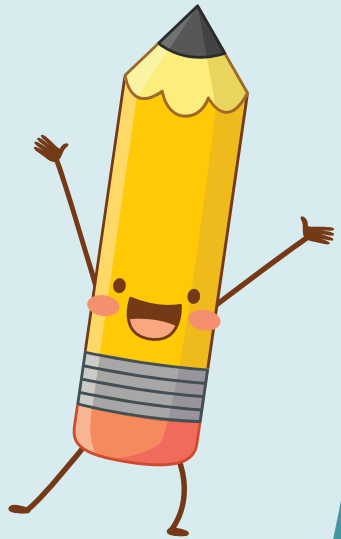
- If you are asked about babysitting, that is between you, your parents and the family asking. This is not something that the church would be involved in.
- Always keep your eyes on the children. Never turn your back to them. They need your focus and attention during the short time you are there.
- No volunteer, teen or adult, should pick up a child, place them on their lap or hold them closely in an inappropriate manner. Giving high-fives, patting gently on the shoulder and side hugs are recommended instead as well as fist bumps or verbal praise.
- Inappropriate contact must be avoided. Examples of that are piggyback rides, lengthy embraces, compliments related to their body development, wrestling or tickling, or unwanted affection.
- When you are working with older children (ages 9-12), remember that you are a more like a mentor to them since you are closer in age. You have an opportunity to be a positive influence on them and can help them make good choices. They will look up to you and want to be like you!

Special Guidelines for Teen Ushers



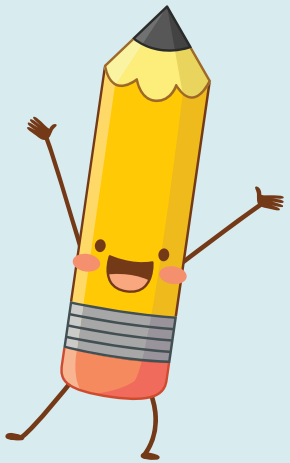
- Check in at the Usher sign in table in the Narthex 15 minutes before Mass.
- Dress appropriately for church.
- Wear your Usher badge. If you do not have one, let your Usher captain know.
- You can assist with the collection by helping to pass baskets but should let an adult Usher collect the money from your baskets.
- You should not enter the Vesting Sacristy while the collection money is being turned in. You should also not be asked to sign for the money or witness it being placed in the safe.
- Always keep your eyes on the congregation during Mass and be on the lookout for someone who may need help. Report any concerns to an adult Usher.
- All safety incidents must be reported to a supervising adult or church staff even if there appears to be no injury.

What To Expect from Adults That You Volunteer With



- You should never be left alone with children or left on your own without an adult leader when serving at Mass.
- If you see an adult volunteer or church staff (including clergy) not following guidelines or asking you to do something that you know you should not, please report it to the church Safe Environment Office. Ask your parents to help you make a report.
- You should expect adults that are working with you to be respectful, kind and good role models.
- No adult should ask you to keep a secret from your parents, friends or other trusted adults.
- No adult should invite you to spend personal time alone with them without your parent's knowledge and approval.
- No adult should touch you or invade your personal space in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- No adult should ask you for your personal contact information such as your phone number, email, or home address. They should also not ask you to friend them on social media.
- Report anything that concerns you or makes you feel uncomfortable to a trusted adult, staff member or to the church Safe Environment Office. An adult leader or staff member can help you make a report.

What If You See or Hear Something of Concern?



While you are volunteering, you could possibly see or hear something that makes you feel awkward or uncomfortable or something that you know is just not right.

Although this rarely happens, you need to know what to do if it does.

If a child tells you that they are being hurt or mentions anything to you that sounds like abuse, you **MUST** tell someone. Even if the child asks you to keep it a secret. There are no secrets if a child is in danger.

Even if you are not sure that what you have seen or heard is wrong and no matter who is involved, **SAY SOMETHING!**

Report what you have seen or heard to one of the following people:

- A trusted adult volunteer or leader
- Church staff
- The church Safe Environment Office
- If a possible crime is involved or someone is in immediate danger, contact Law Enforcement.
- Have your parents and/or a trusted adult help you especially if you are scared or nervous about reporting.

Wrapping It Up!

- Sign the Teen Code of Conduct
- Sign the Handbook Acknowledgement
- Any Questions, email the church Safe Environment Office at: safeenvironment@spccdallas.org.

