

Guidelines for Volunteer Leaders Working with Children



Duty of Care

To be a leader working alongside children and/or young people is a very privileged position and experience. The values and attitudes you and fellow leaders bring to these relationships are crucial in supporting the emotional, social and religious development of those entrusted to our care within Augustinian ministries.

What is expected of each of us is set out in the *OSA Code of Adult Behaviour*. Our individual and collective commitment is to do much good and protect others from harm. Whatever your role, each volunteer leader and staff person is required to sign-up to this *Code of Behaviour*. Together we create safe environments and nurturing experiences for children and young people to grow in relationship with their family of faith and with God.

Core Values and Attitudes

While there is a range of possible roles to choose from when volunteering in church, each has a set of specific tasks and yet, the same core values and attitudes apply (e.g. Choir Leader; Reader; Collector; Steward; Eucharistic Minister; Youth Ministry Leader). What should you watch-out for? Well, below is a list of guidance that will apply to all roles (i.e. volunteers, staff & religious):

- ✓ Be a team player supporting your fellow leaders in the interest of all group members.
- ✓ Parental Consent is a statement of trust in your ability to look after children individually and in a group setting. As such, you are a role model to the group members. You are not their 'friend' and there should be no special relationship or 'keeping secrets between us'. Your personal information should be kept private.
- ✓ Supervision is vital at all times based on sufficient leaders being present. Activities should not go ahead if that is not the case, even if that means disappointing both children and parents/guardians. (Note: Minimum ratio is two leaders to every 8 children).
- ✓ Work together in plain sight and do not work alone with a child. Where small groups are part of the activity leaders should work in pairs and where possible, preferable based on a gender balance.
- ✓ Respect the needs of others. Some children are shy and some outgoing. Each deserves to find his or her own place with encouragement and with an eye to treating everyone fairly.
- ✓ Children are naturally impacted by both personal and family circumstances. It's important to work with and support them in a patient, caring and non-judgmental manner.
- ✓ Recognise that personal or family matters may also prevent you from giving of your best. Speak with the Ministry Co-ordinator as early as possible to plan for a temporary absence if needs be. That way alternative arrangements can be made among the remaining leaders.
- ✓ Set the tone of the activity by meeting and greeting parents and children with a smile.

- ✓ The activity space must be safe & well prepared before the participants arrive. Annually a 'Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment' will need to be completed to ensure that all necessary protections are in place or if not, that appropriate action is taken before continuing with the ministry activity. See Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment Guidance¹.
- ✓ Depending upon the age group the children may be able to help in the set-up and clean-up afterwards.
- ✓ Having the children agree 'Group Rules' is a good way to let both children and parents/guardians know what is expected. See OSA Website for relevant Guidelines².
- ✓ Involve the children in the group activity by assigning appropriate jobs and allowing different children to try-out new jobs. Assist where help is needed with the individual's permission. Do not assume.
- ✓ Where you have a concern about a child's safety speak with the Ministry Co-ordinator and/or Prior/PP who, in turn, can seek the advice of the Designated Liaison Person. In case of an emergency, where there is an immediate risk to a child, then the local TUSLA Office or Garda Station can be contacted with the DLP then being notified afterwards.
- ✓ Finally, remember that you do not 'own' the ministry or the group regardless of how long you have been involved with them. It is both generous to give of your best and then to move on at the right time to let others become involved. Change, depending upon how we approach it, can be good for everyone.

Role Description

Having a 'Role Description' helps to clearly outline the responsibilities and duties involved. As each role is different, though the same qualities and attitudes apply in working with children and fellow leaders, it is a good exercise to write both responsibilities and duties down and agree them. For a Sample 'Role Description' please see below where more detailed tasks are listed as duties to be undertaken by the appropriate leaders.

Assistance

Should you wish to write-up a 'Role Description' and/or require any other assistance regarding ministry with children or young people, please contact the Safeguarding Officer (i.e. Safeguarding@augustinians.ie).

End.

(V.1 – 141221)

¹ <https://augustinians.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Guidance-Child-SafeguardingRisk-Assessment.pdf>

² <https://augustinians.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Guidance-Developing-a-Code-of-Conduct-for-Children-6-12-yrs..pdf>

SAMPLE: Family Mass Volunter Role Description

Volunteer Name: _____

Work Title:	Family Mass Team Member
Job Description:	Working with Children to organise and participate in family masses

Key Task	Skills	Y	N
Practice Sessions: Working with the Children and Parents	Every 2 nd Saturday from September to June, meet and greet children and parents on arrival at 11.30am. Invite children to sign the register of attendance – ensuring that all children sign in.		
	Explain the theme of the mass. Prepare the prayers, readings songs and music, and offertory procession.		
	Instruct children in new music, songs, work to be done. Sing along with the children, helping them to learn the music and songs. Assist the children with artwork. After practicing the singing, bring children into the church to practice using microphones.		
	Assign jobs to the children – working to ensure that they all feel valued and part of the work.		
	Create a safe and happy space for the children to be in. Taking care of the children until they are collected at 12.45pm.		

Key Task	Skills	Y	N
Masses: Working with Augustinians Community, Children and Parents	Meet the children and parents on arrival. Invite children to sign attendance register – ensuring that all children sign in.		
	Setup microphones, and any other equipment needed in good time for mass. Liaise with priest saying mass.		
	Participate in the liturgy with the children, assisting and encouraging them in the planned schedule for mass. Assisting the children where necessary in their assigned duties.		

Key Task	Skills	Y	N
Planning activities for Children	Prior to practice week meet the other members of Family Mass Team to research, plan and prepare themes and structure of work for each mass. This includes prayers, readings, songs, artwork and sometimes drama. Record this in the Green folder.		
	Type up prayers and song sheet for use at practices and mass.		

GUIDANCE FOR MINISTRY LEADERS

Key Task	Skills	Y	N
Communication with others, e.g. Parents, Staff & Augustinian Community	Prior to practice session send reminder text to parents of practice date and time.		
	Inform/involve Augustinian community of plan for mass.		
	Engage with parents after mass – thank them for encouraging and bringing the children		
Safeguarding Children	Use Sign In/Out Attendance Book for practice sessions and masses.		
	Be aware of and practice the Safeguarding Children policies and practices of the Augustinian Community.		
	Be aware of any risks or hazards to the children – trailing leads, unsafe equipment, etc.		
	Never leave children unattended. Two leaders should always be present. Ask parents or guardians to collect the child from the practice room and not the church door.		
	Occasional trips outside the church – written parental consent must be obtained before any child is taken on a trip. All children must be accompanied at all times by team members. Ensure that safety procedures are adhered to and followed during trips.		

Volunteer

Name (*please print*): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Augustinian Representative

Name (*please print*): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Note: Explanation and terms used in this form are intended as a guide only and are not a legal interpretation.