



### **Protocol for Volunteer Safety, Conduct, and Protection of Minors and Volunteers**

Thank you for joining *Following Francis* as a valued and most welcome volunteer. Because *Following Francis* programs support children and families, **this Protocol sets forth important guidelines and responsibilities that apply to all *Following Francis* programs and activities, which you must understand and honor.**

- I. *Following Francis* embraces the core values of respect, service, compassion, and care to guide all aspects of our programs and activities. These values are fully expressed in the life of Francis of Assisi, our organization's namesake, who is recognized around the world for his love for humanity and all of creation.
- II. All children and adults participating in *Following Francis* programs and activities are our honored guests. They are to be treated with kindness, respect, and care throughout the course of their involvement in these programs and activities.
- III. *Following Francis* volunteers are called upon to maintain the highest standards of conduct, including use of language, behavior, and interactions that consistently demonstrate safety, respect, kindness, dignity, and care for all persons.
- IV. *Following Francis* is committed to protecting the physical, sexual, and emotional safety of every person, **including all children, adults, and volunteers**, participating in or supporting *Following Francis* programs and activities

### **Protection of Minors and Volunteers**

- V. All volunteers are required to read and agree to this Protocol as provided online or in hard copy. For specific activities, additional training may be conducted by the Executive Director or designated *Following Francis* Safety Officers and Support Team members, individually or in small or large groups. This protocol emphasizes the crucial importance of child and volunteer safety – physical, sexual, and emotional – and promotes volunteer sensitivity to and awareness of how their behavior and actions impact others.
- VI. The following key elements are designed to ensure the safety of children, adults, and volunteers.

- a. Volunteers may not be rude to, yell at, shame, humiliate, intimidate, or ridicule any child, adult, volunteer, or any other person involved in our programs and activities
  - b. Volunteers are free to guide the behavior of participants in *Following Francis* programs and activities only in a loving and kind manner, without any physical force, coercion, or unkind language, facial expressions, or insinuations.
  - c. Volunteers are asked to monitor themselves and their own self-discipline. If children or adults are beginning to “test” them and volunteers feel themselves losing their self-control, they must **immediately** ask for assistance from *Following Francis* coordinators or the Executive Director and remove themselves from the situation.
- VII. The following guidelines apply especially to *Following Francis* programs and activities involving children or where children are present. They are designed to ensure the safety of children, adults, and volunteers participating in or supporting these programs and activities.
- a. Volunteers must never be alone with a child.
  - b. Volunteers must never escort children to the bathroom or to any closed area that is not in plain view, easily and openly visible to others.
  - c. Volunteers may never touch a child, unless reasonably required to assist the child in the assigned *Following Francis* activities. Even then, touch is limited specifically to the task and must be safe and respectful to the child.
  - d. Volunteers must refrain from showing physical affection to children. They are permitted to shake hands and smile kindly, but no volunteer is permitted to pick up, carry, hug, rock, or pat the head or body of a child.
  - e. Volunteers must not tickle, chase, or tease the children.
  - f. No volunteer is ever to invite or permit a child to sit on his/her lap.
  - g. If a volunteer must, for a child’s safety, escort a child to the Support Area or a Nurse’s or Doctor’s station, they must try to bring another adult or two or more children with them.
  - h. In the unlikely case of an emergency when a child’s safety is in jeopardy, a volunteer must consider the risk factors to the child. If carrying them to safety is required, the volunteer will have to accept the risk of that behavior and err on the side of protecting the child.
  - i. Volunteers may never photograph any children or other *Following Francis* participants using their own or another volunteer’s camera, phone, or any device, or share photos via social media networks, *unless assigned such tasks by the Program Coordinators and Directors.*
  - j. When volunteers are invited to be in any photograph, they are asked to keep their hands in plain view, not behind the child’s back, and maintain a safe physical boundary.
  - k. Volunteers do not act as chaperones and must always be in the company of the parent or designated chaperone with children present.

- I. Volunteers may never discipline children using unkind words or a harsh tone of voice.
- VIII. **Mandated Reporting:** *Following Francis* has designated volunteers who are mandated reporters at all events. If any volunteer suspects a child/adult to be the victim of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, the volunteer is required to contact one of the *Following Francis* coordinators, who will consult with the *Following Francis* Safety and Support Team who serve as mandated reporters. These team members include, but are not limited to: Dr. Ivy Summers, Dr. Jimmy Venza, Dr. Gwendolyn Hamilton, Dr. Robert Johnson, Dr. Tighe O'Hanrahan, and the Executive Director, Terry Johnson.

### **Disciplinary Process for Violations of this Protocol**

Please understand that *Following Francis* has ***absolutely zero tolerance*** for abusive or inappropriate behavior toward children or adults.

- a. Any abusive behavior by a volunteer will lead to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or removal from participation in any *Following Francis* programs or activities; and being reported to child/adult protection authorities as required by law.
- b. Any volunteer behaving or interacting toward a child, group of children, adult, or volunteer in a way that violates *Following Francis'* core values and code of conduct may be temporarily removed from participation in the *Following Francis* activity and placed on probationary status.
- c. As part of probation, the volunteer will be required to complete a refresher training session and re-attest to this Protocol, with volunteer reinstatement confirmed by the *Following Francis* Executive Director or program coordinator.
- d. Probationary status can include two weeks or more without participation in a *Following Francis* program and activities based on the determination of the *Following Francis* Executive Director or a program coordinator.
- e. Any further behaviors prohibited by this Protocol will likely result in the volunteer's removal from *Following Francis* programs.

I have read and understand the requirements of this Protocol and agree to abide by them.

Volunteer Signature

Printed Name

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\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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If the volunteer is under 18 years of age, a parent or guardian must read and sign the following:

This release, its significance, and assumption of risk have been explained to and are understood by the minor.

Parent or Guardian Signature

Printed Name

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Date: