

**Code Of Ethics
For Volunteers
And
Voluntary Organizations
Of The
Archdiocese Of Malta**

25 October 2014

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1. Introduction.

Within the Catholic Church, Voluntary Work has always been another means where Christian faith, whilst working within the community, not only leaves a positive impact on society but even changes the world we live in.

Catholic Voluntary Work , inspired by the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching, promotes Social Justice and Solidarity for people of all ages, backgrounds and skills, with a special focus on the poor and those in need. Catholic Volunteers , whilst aiming to be inclusive and collaborative, are constantly encouraged to utilize God's given skills and charisms towards the common good. Volunteers play also a very important role in so many cultural and religious activities of the Catholic Church in Malta.

The disposition of doing voluntary work injects a fresh breath of life into the church, because voluntary work amply demonstrates the living faith of a community committed to serving others. Let us not forget that Christ came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life for others.

Whilst all voluntary work must be of the highest standard, it should take a holistic approach encompassing both the volunteer as well as the beneficiaries of the various voluntary organizations within the Archdiocese of Malta.

The Catholic Church in Malta , as a pioneer in promoting Voluntary Organizations, has a glorious history in the voluntary sector.

On the 5th. December 2012, the Diocesan Office For Voluntary Work was inaugurated. Its aim is to help, co-ordinate and strengthen voluntary work in the Archdiocese.

This Code Of Ethics, drawn up by this office, is intended to help both the volunteer and the voluntary organization. However there could be instances where certain voluntary organizations may need to amend certain parts of this Code Of Ethics.

Any such amendments can only be made with the prior written authorization of the Director of this office or his designate.

1.2 Definitions

The following terms used in this Code Of Ethics, unless the context requires otherwise, will have the following meaning:

1.2.1 Volunteer

" Volunteer " means a person who provides services without any remuneration either through a “ voluntary organization” or in his own personal capacity. Volunteers under the age of eighteen (18) are to be considered and treated as “Minors”.

(Note: Persons receiving the service are not considered as “volunteers” and are therefore excluded from this Code Of Ethics. E.G. Children attending Catechism lessons).

1.2.2 Voluntary Work

Contributing time, services, expertise, knowledge, prestige and/or personal connections, for a mutually agreed period, directly or indirectly, for the benefit of individuals known or unknown alike (excluding family members), organizations, foundations and societies, community and/or the environment.

1.2.3 Voluntary Organization

“Voluntary Organization” , means a group of people performing voluntary work in line with Clause 1.2.2.

A “Voluntary Organization” must have the official recognition of either the local Diocesan Authorities, or the local Parish Priest or any other Catholic Religious Order or Congregation. Normally, a Voluntary Organization, hereinafter referred to “organization”, is set up:

- (a) for a legitimate aim
- (b) with no scope for any profit and
- (c) to enable persons to perform the work detailed in clause 1.2.2

1.2.4 "Administrator"

"Administrator" means a person appointed or approved by the competent authorities of the Archdiocese of Malta, or the members of the organization as stipulated in the statutes of the organization. The “Administrator”, whilst promoting the aims of the organization, administers and ensures that the organization aligns itself with the teachings of the Catholic Church, the norms of the Archdiocese of Malta and the spirit and the statute of the organization.

1.2.5 “Minors”

Volunteers under the age of eighteen (18) cannot participate in any voluntary work without a prior written consent of their parents or legal guardian in the format detailed in “Annex A” of this Code Of Ethics.

2. Volunteers' Rights

2.1 Core Values

Volunteering is the exercise of individuals' rights and binds individuals to complete the task they have undertaken. As volunteering is a matter of an individual's conscious choice, an organization benefiting from voluntary efforts must uphold volunteers' rights and ensure they are aware of them.

2.1.1 Respectful Treatment

Volunteers will be treated with decency and respect by all persons connected with the voluntary process.

2.1.2 Partnership

Individuals who choose to volunteer express their willingness to contribute and cooperate. Their choice therefore binds organizations to formulate rules that regulate their partnership with volunteers, and to regard these rules as an inseparable part of volunteers' rights. Volunteers will take part in planning the course of their activities and in all decisions concerning these activities, and will be allowed to freely voice their opinions and make suggestions.

2.1.3 Information

Volunteers will have access to organizational information on issues concerning their voluntary work: policies, regulations, work plans and fiscal reports.

2.1.4 Equality

Volunteers will not be discriminated against. The nature and demands of certain voluntary organizations within the Archdiocese Of Malta may however have specific gender and/or other status restrictions.

2.1.5 Privacy

Volunteers are entitled to privacy throughout the course of their voluntary work. Information regarding volunteers will not be disclosed without receiving their prior consent, unless the provisions of any applicable law stipulate to the contrary.

2.2 Volunteers' Workplace Rights

2.2.1 Appropriate Positions

Taking into account the organization's goals, requirements and availability, volunteers are entitled to choose a position matching their personal inclination, experience, education, beliefs and employment background. Volunteers deserve consideration of their preference, profession, skills and suitability for the position, the nature of the position, and the amount of time it requires.

2.2.2 Information Regarding the Position

Volunteers will receive detailed information about positions offered to them and the amount of time and resources they require. In addition, they are also entitled to receive all necessary written information about the organization and their rights as volunteers working on its behalf.

2.2.3 Time Allocation

Subject to the organization's policies, goals and requirements, volunteers themselves, in agreement with the administrator or his/her delegate, will determine the amount of time they devote to voluntary work.

2.2.4 Proper Formation and Training

Volunteers are entitled to be provided with, and participate in, formation meetings and courses to enhance in their lives the teaching and values of the Catholic Church. They are also entitled to receive all the necessary training and guidance in every aspect relating to their work

2.2.5 Appropriate Conditions

Volunteers will enjoy appropriate conditions and be provided with all resources and physical conditions necessary to perform their voluntary work, and will operate in a physically and emotionally safe working environment. The needs of disabled volunteers will be carefully taken into account.

2.2.6 Volunteer's Card

Preferably, although not mandatory, Volunteers will receive identification cards bearing their name and photograph, which they can display on any volunteering-related occasion.

2.2.7 Reimbursement

At the discretion of the volunteer, any expenses (such as travel and work-related telephone calls) incurred by the volunteer, will be reimbursed. The expenses must be incurred in line with a prior written agreement between the organization and the volunteer, and in consideration of organizational policies.

2.2.8 Feedback

Volunteers will be given feedback regarding the manner in which they perform their functions and the organization's satisfaction with their work, at least annually.

2.2.9 Insurance Policy

It is recommended that all volunteers referred to in this Code Of Ethics will be covered by a Third Party Insurance Policy.

2.2.10 Appreciation and Recognition

Organisations are to show appreciation and recognition to volunteers for their efforts and the results they achieve in their work.

2.2.11 Termination of Voluntary Work

Volunteers may terminate their voluntary work within an organization provided they give sufficient prior notice of their intentions. Although the position of a Minor volunteer is an “at will” relationship and may be terminated at any time, a notice of termination will be greatly appreciated.

3. Volunteers' Obligations

3.1 Obligations Toward Organizations

In participating in voluntary work, volunteers express a personal, religious, human, honest commitment, a fundamental and essential element that enables the act of volunteering. This commits volunteers to a series of obligations through the contract between them and their organizations. Without these obligations, the contract is devoid of its mutual nature.

3.1.1 Volunteers must possess a sense of commitment and loyalty towards the people they serve and the organization.

3.1.2 Volunteers must conduct themselves according to the rules prescribed by the organization to regulate the process of volunteering.

3.1.3 Volunteers must act in accordance with the organization's goals.

3.1.4 Volunteers must protect the organization's good standing.

3.1.5 Volunteers must respect the organization's property.

3.1.6 Volunteers must respect and follow the organization's code of ethics , its rules,norms and accepted manners of conduct, as well as all other organizational demands.

3.1.7 Volunteers must aspire to excellence in the tasks they take upon themselves.

3.1.8 Volunteers must constantly strive to improve the skills required for their work by participating in personal and group training programs.

3.1.9 Volunteers must report in advance any change in their conditions of volunteering.

3.1.10 Confidentiality

Volunteers hereby agree not to disclose any information acquired while volunteering, whether written or verbal, to any persons, authorities or organizations, unless specifically instructed to do so by functionaries in charge of confidentiality issues within their organization, or unless so required by a legal order. In this clause, information refers to:

3.1.10.1 Information concerning the organization, its paid or voluntary workers, its financial resources or donors.

3.1.10.2 Information regarding the organization's clients.

3.1.11 Refusal to Accept Benefits

Volunteers pledge not to receive benefits in any form from the organization's clients or any other persons.

3.1.12 Avoiding a Conflict of Interests

Volunteers pledge to avoid a conflict of interests and to notify the organization of any such conflict existing between their activities, positions within the organization, or their association with it, and all other activities in which they engage.

3.1.13 Reporting Relevant Issues

Volunteers must notify their Administrator about any issue that might affect their ability to perform their functions (health or other factors) or cause harm to themselves or others, as soon as possible and before the commencement of their voluntary work.

3.1.14 Reporting Unethical Organizational Behavior

Volunteers must report organizational behavior that fails to comply with ethical criteria, including unlawful conduct (of directors, paid workers or other volunteers), using the organization's proper channels, or any other legal means.

3.2 Obligations Toward Clients

Volunteers must respect clients, treat them in a dignified, responsible, patient and tolerant manner, refrain from discriminating or biased treatment of clients, and respect individual difference.

3.3 Obligations Toward Colleagues (Paid Workers and Volunteers)

Volunteers must cooperate with their colleagues, volunteers and paid workers alike, and treat them respectfully, decently and equally.

Volunteers failing to uphold the above-mentioned ethical demands might face sanctions, which might include terminating their voluntary work. The volunteers involved will have the right to appear before the Church Authorities and state their case.

4. The Organization's Obligations

4.1 Obligations Toward the Volunteer

4.1.1 Personal Treatment

The organization and all persons working on its behalf must treat volunteers and their activities in an appropriate, respectful and decent manner.

4.1.2 Volunteers' Involvement

The organization must regard its volunteers as partners, maintain their right to have a say in their work and related decisions, and create an environment in which volunteers are free to voice their opinions, to make suggestions and to criticize.

4.1.3 Transparency

The organization must operate a transparent information system, encompassing its policies, regulations, work plans and financial statements, and ensure that volunteers have access to relevant information.

4.1.4 Reporting Flaws

The organization must support volunteers reporting illegal, unethical or otherwise improper conduct of members, workers or management. Reporting these flaws must not compromise volunteers' rights or promotion.

4.1.5 Lack of Discrimination

Volunteers will not be discriminated against. . The nature and demands of certain voluntary organizations within the Archdiocese Of Malta may however have specific gender and/or other status restrictions.

4.1.6 Privacy

The organization will protect volunteers' privacy, and make certain that no information concerning them is disclosed without receiving their prior consent, unless any applicable law stipulates to the contrary.

4.2 Obligations Toward Paid Workers

The organization must assure that its paid workers are professionally prepared for routine cooperation with volunteers and ensure that the status of the paid workers is not compromised by volunteers' working for the organization.

4.3 Obligations Toward Clients

An organization employing volunteers must devise a policy of providing its clients with trustworthy, reliable service, based on equal, fair and unbiased criteria, maintain service accessibility and respect individual difference.

4.4 Volunteer Management Obligations

4.4.1 Assigning Volunteers with an Appropriate Position

The organization must provide volunteers with suitable positions. These positions must suit their abilities and performance while taking into account the organization's goals and needs.

4.4.2 Providing Information

The organization must provide volunteers with information about their positions and the amount of time and resources required to perform them.

4.4.3 Time Allocation

The organization, in accordance with its policies, goals and needs, must allow volunteers to determine the amount of time they devote to voluntary work.

4.4.4 Proper Acceptance of Volunteers

The organization must provide new volunteers with an informative, explanatory plan containing information about its structure and their specific roles, thereby assisting them to perform their duties efficiently.

4.4.5 Proper Training and Guidance of Volunteers

The organization must provide its volunteers with ongoing training and guidance in every aspect concerning their work.

4.4.6 Promotion and Personal Development

Taking into account the organization's needs, the organization will ensure that volunteers enjoy promotion and personal development at work, based on their own preference, skills and abilities.

4.4.7 Appropriate Conditions

Volunteers will enjoy appropriate working conditions and be provided with all resources and physical conditions necessary to perform their voluntary work, and will operate in a physically and emotionally safe working environment.

4.4.8 Volunteer's Card

The organization, if possible, will provide volunteers with identification cards, bearing their name and photograph, which they may display on any volunteering-related occasion.

4.4.9 Maintaining Well Organized Records

The organization must keep well-ordered records of its volunteers.

4.4.10 Feedback

The organization must give its volunteers feedback regarding the manner in which they perform their roles and the organization's satisfaction with their work.

4.4.11 Esteem and Reward

The organization will hold volunteers' efforts and the products of their work in high regard and express this appreciation in appropriate ways.

4.4.12 Participation in Events and Conferences

The organization must invite volunteers to take an active part in events it holds, in order to encourage partnership and unity between hired and voluntary staff members.

4.4.13 Terminating Volunteers' Work

The volunteer Administrator, or any other person authorized by the organization, relying on sound evidence proving a volunteer unfit to work for the organization, and having given said volunteer the opportunity to argue his case, will be entitled to terminate a volunteer's work in the organization.

4.4.14 Displaying the Code Of Ethics

This Code Of Ethics should be displayed in a clearly visible place in the Organization's offices/premises.

5. Conclusion

In his 2010 Christmas message, H.E. Archbishop Emeritus Paul Cremona O.P. said:

“ Lets us ask ourselves: Am I living a self-centred life or am I ready to share it with others? Can't I dedicate some of my precious time towards helping others? Our Lord wanted to give us a lesson which we should treasure in our hearts. There is joy in receiving, but there is even a greater joy in giving; when you dedicate your time towards others you will be giving yourself to others.”

The Archbishop concluded his message as follows:

“ Many people tell us that our country has the hallmark of the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. May our faith in Him continue to manifest itself more tangibly and even stronger, in an atmosphere of self-giving, of generosity, of volunteering.”

Annex A:

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM FOR MINOR VOLUNTEERS (UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE.)

(To be signed by both parents and/or Legal Guardians)

Parents or Legal Guardians for:

_____ *(Name of Volunteer)*

_____ *(I.D. Card Number of Volunteer---- if available)*

We are the parents or legal guardians of the minor named above.

By our signatures below, we authorize the minor named above to volunteer at

the _____ *(Name of Voluntary Organization)*

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

ID Card Number : _____ Mobile: _____

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

ID Card Number : _____ Mobile: _____

THANK YOU FOR VOLUNTEERING.