



FMP NH, INC.

Safe Environment Policy

As Catholics committed to protecting those entrusted to our care, we understand how vital it is for all those who minister in the Church to establish and maintain healthy relationships and appropriate boundaries with those whom we serve.

Aware that our faith calls us to uphold the dignity and respect the welfare of all, it is our hope that this Safe Environment Policy will lead those who represent the Franciscan Mystery Players to a heightened awareness of the need to be vigilant about consistently maintaining professional relationships with all those to whom they minister.

As a ministry engaging with minors, FMP NH, Inc. is committed to upholding its Volunteers, Officers, and Board of Directors to a high standard of conduct. All who serve in this ministry in an official capacity are required to acknowledge, sign, and formally commit to this policy, and review it periodically to ensure it stays up-to-date.

FMP NH, Inc. acknowledges the Diocese of Manchester Safe Environment Program as the primary model for our safe environment practices. While FMP NH, Inc. is an independent nonprofit entity, we voluntarily align our standards with the diocesan program whenever applicable.

Where our programs, structure, or operations differ from diocesan environments, this FMP Safe Environment Policy governs.



FMP NH, INC.

Safe Environment Policy

Ministry Personnel Selection & Eligibility

"Personnel" includes any and all staff, volunteers, and officers and/or directors of the board. It does not necessarily include parents serving as drivers, who have different requirements set upon them, notably, not requiring a Criminal Background Check or Safe Environment Training. (*FMP Transportation & Carpool Policy*). Such sections not required are noted.

Criminal Background Check

Prior to formal onboarding, all Personnel will be required to undergo a Criminal Background Check from the State of New Hampshire. Personnel will be expected to undergo this requirement every (5) years, or after any period of extended absence from serving in the ministry. Personnel are expected to be able to pass a Criminal Background and/or Federal Background Check at any time if requested. The Board Secretary will keep on file the expiration date of the Background Checks and ensure no lapse in certification. **Not required for parents serving as drivers*

Registered Sex Offenders

Individuals who are registered sex offenders are strictly prohibited from serving, volunteering, or participating in any capacity within FMP NH, Inc. This is a diocesan rule, and no exceptions will be made.

Safe Environment Training

All Personnel working directly or communicating with minors must complete Safe Environment training. Personnel who have completed Safe Environment training through another parish, diocese, or equivalent organization may satisfy this requirement by submitting proof of current certification.

Determinations of equivalency are made by the Board of Directors. If prior training is not approved as equivalent, or if certification is expired or unavailable, Personnel must complete Diocesan Safe Environment training through Sainte Marie Parish (facilitated by the Board President) or another Board-approved program prior to service. The Board Secretary will keep on file the expiration date of Safe Environment Compliance and ensure the Board President and Personnel are aware of an upcoming lapse in certification. **Not required for parents serving as drivers*



FMP NH, INC.

Safe Environment Policy

Diocese of Manchester Policies

Personnel are expected to be familiar with and respect the intent and guiding principles of the following Diocese of Manchester policies, except where this FMP NH, Inc. Safe Environment Policy provides otherwise:

¹**Serving Christ, Serving Others** *Code of Ministerial Conduct*

²**Promise to Protect, Pledge to Heal** *Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People*

³**Electronic Communications Policy**

⁴**Registered Sex Offender Guidelines**

Acknowledgement and Agreement

All Personnel are required to complete the "Safe Environment Policy Acknowledgement and Commitment Form" as necessary.

**Not required for parents serving as drivers*

General Principles of Ethics & Integrity

Standards for Ethical and Moral Behavior

Beyond the obvious standards for correct moral behavior in Sacred Scripture and the Tradition of the Church (i.e., the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Catechism of the Catholic Church), personnel are required to behave in a manner consistent with accepted Catholic

standards of moral and ethical conduct.

Personnel are prohibited from engaging in harassment, including sexual harassment and sexual exploitation.

Standards for Working with Minors

For purposes of this Policy, all Players and participants enrolled in Franciscan Mystery Players programming are subject to the standards set forth herein for the duration of their participation, regardless of whether they are under or over the age of eighteen (18).

Awareness of Vulnerability

Personnel must be aware of their own vulnerability and that of any minor with whom they are working. Personnel should avoid situations where they are alone with a minor. When it is not feasible to have another individual present, such as when counseling or teaching a minor, personnel must meet with the minor in as public a place as possible, such as a room with the door open or with a clear window in the door.

Verbal & Physical Interaction

Personnel are prohibited from speaking to minors in a way that is or could be construed by any observer as being harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Personnel are expected to refrain from using profane language in the presence of minors and must never use any discipline that frightens or humiliates children and



FMP NH, INC.

Safe Environment Policy

youth. Personnel are prohibited from using physical discipline, including but not limited to spanking, slapping, hitting, or any other physical force. If a minor exhibits uncontrollable or unusual behavior, the worker or volunteer should notify the appropriate supervisor and a parent or guardian of the minor.

Physical contact with minors beyond a handshake or a "high-five" can be misconstrued both by minors and adults, and should not occur except under appropriate public circumstances. The following are examples (not an exclusive list) of behavior in which Personnel should never engage with minors: inappropriate or lengthy embraces; kisses on the mouth; holding minors over five years old on the lap; intentionally touching bottoms, chests, legs, or genital areas; showing affection while in an isolated location; wrestling or giving piggyback rides; giving massages; or paying compliments that relate to physique or body development.

Prohibited Use of Illicit Substances & Media

Personnel must not use or supply alcohol and/or illegal drugs when working with minors or while participating in a youth activity. Moreover, Personnel must not be under the influence of alcohol or impairing drugs (including prescription medication that causes impairment) while working with minors. Personnel must not provide any sexually explicit, inappropriate, or

offensive material to minors. Personnel are prohibited from possessing or viewing any sexually-oriented or morally inappropriate printed materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) on church property or in the presence of minors. Personnel are also prohibited from viewing sexually-oriented or morally inappropriate websites or viewing or sending such electronic mail messages on church property, while using church or ministry equipment, or in the presence of minors.

Grooming Awareness

Personnel should be aware of the signs of "grooming" (the process by which sexual predators attempt to manipulate their potential victims) and must not engage in practices with youth that could be perceived by a reasonable person to be "grooming." Some examples of grooming behaviors are: giving non-token gifts to minors; contacting minors outside of the ministry setting; showing favoritism to select minors; overstepping appropriate boundaries of adult-minor relationships by acting as a friend or peer; allowing minors to break established rules; and establishing separate, private relationships with minors.

Personal Guidance & Counseling

Personnel should exercise caution when offering personal guidance or advice to minors or other participants. Any such interactions must respect appropriate



FMP NH, INC.

Safe Environment Policy

boundaries, remain age-appropriate, and avoid topics of a personal, psychological, or spiritual nature that could create dependency, confusion, or the appearance of a counseling relationship. Personnel are encouraged to refer individuals to parents, guardians, or qualified professionals for guidance beyond routine program support.

Two-Adult Rule

To ensure the safety of minors, a minimum of two adult personnel must be present whenever children are supervised during FMP NH, Inc. programs or activities. In limited cases where only one adult is present, prior approval must be obtained from the Board President, the door must remain open, and at least three minors must be present. This exception should be documented and reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Transportation of minors for FMP NH, Inc. activities may be provided by approved Personnel or parents with appropriate permission. A single adult may transport minors, provided that no adult transports a single minor alone unless the minor is a family member or prior written parental permission has been obtained. Whenever feasible, at least two minors should be present in the vehicle. All transportation must comply with applicable law and insurance requirements.

Release & Supervision

At the close of services or activities, Personnel should release minors in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians. In the event that Personnel are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a minor, they should immediately locate or contact their supervisor before releasing the child.

Communications

All electronic communications conducted on behalf of FMP NH, Inc. must be professional, transparent, and directly related to ministry activities. Personnel may communicate electronically with minors only for legitimate program purposes and will do so only in group messages with a parent(s) or guardian(s) included whenever reasonably possible; ongoing private one-to-one electronic communications with minors are prohibited. Personnel may not send, request, or engage in inappropriate, suggestive, or secretive communications; may not use auto-deleting, anonymous, or concealed messaging platforms; and may not communicate with minors through personal social media or any kind of direct messages. All electronic communications must maintain appropriate boundaries, be capable of review if necessary, and align with diocesan safe environment standards and this policy.



FMP NH, INC.

Safe Environment Policy

Social Media Usage

FMP NH, Inc. does not currently utilize social media platforms for ministry communications, and Personnel are expected to refrain from creating or disseminating ministry-related content through social media on behalf of the organization. Personnel are prohibited from adding minors as "friends," "followers," or contacts on personal social media accounts. All electronic communication with minors must be transparent, professional, and directly related to ministry activities. One-to-one private messaging outside approved group or parental-included channels is not permitted.

Preferred Methods of Communication

Email is the preferred method of communication for ministry purposes; text messages and phone calls may be used when necessary and appropriate, provided they comply with the standards set forth in this policy.

When this Policy applies

This Policy applies when Personnel are acting in an official capacity on behalf of FMP NH, Inc., or when a reasonable person would perceive the interaction to be related to ministry activities. It does not govern purely personal, family, or social relationships outside the context of FMP NH, Inc. programming.

This Policy does not prohibit ordinary communication between family members or established personal relationships outside of FMP NH, Inc. activities. However, during ministry programs, rehearsals, performances, travel, or the general "Season," Personnel are expected to maintain appropriate professional boundaries consistent with this Policy, including taking steps where applicable for transparency and communicating Ministry-related items with two adults present.

Reporting Incidents, Allegations, and Concerns

Reporting

All Personnel have a responsibility to report any behavior, incident, or concern that may violate this Policy or compromise the safety of a minor. Reports must be made promptly to the Board President and the Board Chaplain of FMP NH, Inc.

If a reporting individual is uncomfortable making a report directly to either of those individuals, the report may be made to another member of the Board of Directors, who shall promptly relay the report to the Board President and Board Chaplain.



FMP NH, INC.

Safe Environment Policy

If the report involves the Board President or the Board Chaplain, the report shall be made to another member of the Board of Directors, and the subject of the report shall not be involved in receiving or reviewing the report.

Legal Obligations

Nothing in this Policy is intended to discourage, delay, or prevent any individual from reporting suspected abuse of a minor directly to civil authorities. Where there is reasonable suspicion of abuse, reports must be made in accordance with applicable law. All Personnel are expected to understand and comply with any mandatory reporting obligations imposed by applicable law.

FMP NH, Inc. will cooperate fully with civil authorities in any investigation and will not interfere with or attempt to replace the role of law enforcement or child protection agencies.

Retaliation

Retaliation against any individual who, in good faith, reports a concern or participates in an investigation under this Policy is strictly prohibited.

Next Steps & Disciplinary Action

Upon receiving a report, the Board of Directors will immediately ensure the safety of all minors and personnel involved. Any personnel implicated may be temporarily removed from unsupervised ministry activities pending investigation. Appropriate notifications will be made to civil authorities if required by law. Following review, disciplinary action may include retraining, suspension, removal from ministry, or termination, and any legal obligations will be fully met. The Board will document all steps and maintain transparency with relevant parties while respecting privacy.

Violations of this Policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including removal from service, termination of volunteer or leadership roles, and referral to civil authorities when required or appropriate.



FMP NH, INC.

Safe Environment Policy

The Franciscan Mystery Play Board of Directors is committed to transparency and ongoing evaluation of its practices. Parents with questions or concerns regarding this policy are strongly encouraged to bring them to the Board of Directors.

FMP NH, Inc. reserves the right to update this policy as needed to reflect program growth, evolving best practices, or changes in applicable guidance.

Diocesan Policies Referenced:

<https://www.catholicnh.org/family2/youth/safe-environment/policies/>

¹ **Serving Christ, Serving Others** *Code of Ministerial Conduct*

² **Promise to Protect, Pledge to Heal** *Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People*
<https://www.catholicnh.org/assets/Documents/Child-Safety/Policies/CodePolicy-2019.pdf>

³ **Electronic Communications Policy**
<https://www.catholicnh.org/assets/Documents/Child-Safety/Policies/ElectronicCommunicationsPolicy.pdf>

⁴ **Registered Sex Offender Guidelines**
<https://www.catholicnh.org/assets/Documents/Child-Safety/Policies/RegisteredSexOffenderGuidelines.pdf>