

St. Padre Pio Secular Franciscan Fraternity
Homeless Apostolate Safety Guidelines

June 2025

- 1.0 Scope of Guidelines:** It is conceivable that this Fraternity may have more than one apostolate; therefore, whenever the term “apostolate” is used in these guidelines, it means “homeless apostolate.”
- 2.0 Apostolate Mission:** In keeping with the Franciscan spirit, the members of the St. Padre Pio Fraternity engage in an apostolate of serving homeless individuals in the community by providing clothing, food, water, caring support and other resources that they need.
- 3.0 Purpose:** This document provides general guidance for the safety of everyone joining in to carry out the apostolate, and the safety of persons being served by the apostolate. It also serves to protect from liability the St. Padre Pio Secular Franciscan Fraternity.
- 4.0 Participants:**
- 4.1** Apostolate participants are professed members of the St. Padre Pio Fraternity and individuals in Initial Formation. Guests will be allowed if invited by and accompanied by a member who has previously attended the apostolate.
- 4.2** No child under the age of 16 shall attend, and those invited under the age of 18 must stay with one of the members at or around the car area where the supplies are handed out.
- 5.0 Compliance:**
- 5.1** Fraternity members are to follow all local and state ordinances and laws as well as church regulations, especially those included in our Diocesan Ethics in Ministry guidelines while carrying out this apostolate.
- 5.2** If guidelines are not kept, this should be communicated with the council, and they will follow up with an appropriate decision.
- 5.3** The Fraternity Council should review guidelines periodically to ensure compliance and provide safety updates if needed.

6.0 Location:

- 6.1** Fraternity members should never enter homeless encampments alone. If it is decided it is necessary to enter a homeless encampment, there should always be at least two members and be accompanied by a resident of the camp.
- 6.2** Do not park on or walk onto/into private property or where “No Trespassing” signs are posted or that appears unsafe.

7.0 Reporting

- 7.1** One person in the apostolate should be designated to record the names of everyone who attended, the number of people served, the location(s) visited, and any areas of concern.
- 7.2** This information should be shared at the next fraternity business meeting.

8.0 Medical/Emergency Situations: If fraternity members encounter a life-threatening medical situation occurring, call for 9-1-1 assistance.

9.0 General Guidelines:

- 9.1** Always pray as a group before you go out and upon your return.
- 9.2** Ensure at least one person in the group has a charged phone on them in case of emergencies.
- 9.3** Always be aware of your surroundings, even places you frequent. When in doubt, stay out.
- 9.4** Keep your photo ID, phone, anything else of potential value in front of you/in a front pocket.
- 9.5** Do not wear expensive, flashy accessories or clothes.
- 9.6** Wear closed-toe shoes.
- 9.7** Always be aware of where you step or stand near encampments, watching for hypodermic needles, broken glass, and weapons.
- 9.8** When the apostolate is complete for the day, please ensure you practice proper hygiene to keep yourself and others healthy.
- 9.9** If it seems appropriate ask them if they would like to pray with us.

10.0 Interacting with the Homeless

- 10.1** Be mindful that not everyone will want your help or giveaways. Please do not insist they accept them.
- 10.2** Avoid having more than two people at a time approach an individual. This will help ensure they will not feel threatened.

- 10.3** Pay attention to social cues. Things like facial expressions, body language, glancing at others nearby with certain expressions can indicate whether you're welcome and safe to approach.
- 10.4** If anything makes you feel unsettled, trust that feeling and leave. There should be no feelings of guilt in this situation. Those feelings are there for your protection!
- 10.5** Introduce yourself and state your purpose for approaching.
- 10.6** Listen to each person with interest and compassion.
- 10.7** Everyone's story is going to be different. Maintain an open mind when visiting with each person.
- 10.8** Respect each person's boundaries. Not everyone is welcoming to strangers. Some people may have trust issues, while others are suffering some form of mental illness. Also, some may be experiencing PTSD, especially military veterans, crime victims, or someone who recently experienced a sudden loss of a loved one, job, home, etc. Respect their space. For example, avoid hugging or kissing individuals, especially without their consent.
- 10.9** Maintain eye contact at the same level (e.g., if someone is in a wheelchair, stoop to where you can converse with them at their level).
- 10.10** Many individuals living on the streets have mental health challenges, some of which may not have been diagnosed. Others have been diagnosed but have not maintained medical care. In some cases, their behavior can become unpredictable, perhaps even volatile. Please do not confront them. Peacefully, take leave and only call for medical services intervention if you sense they are a threat to themselves or others.
- 10.11** Smile! It can immediately put people at ease, especially if they have trust issues.
- 10.12** Ask permission if you want to take a picture. Ask permission if you want to use a photo you have taken.
- 10.13** Remember that when individuals are given a gift, including clothing, they may feel obligated to go along with requests, such as pictures or hugging. Be mindful of this fact so as not to put individuals in an uncomfortable situation.

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Guidelines First Adopted by Council June 11, 2025