



## **POLICY & CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES & VOLUNTEERS**

### **INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS**

#### **POLICY STATEMENT**

Our founder, Venerable Catherine McAuley, constantly reminds us that *mercy is the principal path pointed out by Jesus Christ to those who are desirous of following him.*

This Professional Standards Policy (the Policy) expresses our commitment, as Sisters of Mercy, to live and work in accordance with the Gospel ideals and the values and principles as articulated in the *Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy Brisbane* together with the documents, *Integrity in Ministry (IM)*, and *Towards Healing (TH)*, *Integrity in the Service of the Church [ISC]*.

#### **PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE POLICY**

The Congregation recognises and respects the rights and dignity of every child and vulnerable adult. Standards of behaviour and relationships with children and vulnerable adults must always reflect this and must therefore include a firm commitment to provide a safe, caring and life giving environment in which all can feel secure and respected.

The Code of Conduct is underpinned by the documents *TH, IM, ISC*. It is intended to assist:

- Employees of the Congregation understand the expectations and requirements placed upon them during the course of their employment.
- Volunteers whilst engaged in any volunteering role within the Congregation.

The Code of Conduct ought to be read in conjunction with other relevant Congregation Office policies.

If there is any conflict between this Code of Conduct and requirements of the law the legislation will prevail.

#### **DEFINITIONS**

**Safeguarding** is about embedding practices throughout the life and ministry/ies of the Congregation to ensure the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

**Child** is a person under the age of 18.

**Vulnerable Adult** is a person aged 18 years or over who may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or from being exploited. This may include a person who:



- is elderly and frail
- has a mental illness including dementia
- has a sensory, intellectual or physical disability
- has a learning disability
- has a severe physical illness
- is homeless
- is a substance misuser.

**'Harassment'** encompasses a broad range of behaviours, including but not limited to:

- physical, verbal, written or psychological abuse
- bullying
- racial and religious insults
- derogatory ethnic slurs
- unwelcome touching and inappropriate behaviour
- sexual jokes and comments
- requests for sexual favours
- display of pornographic materials.

Harassment can occur as a result of a single incident or a pattern of behaviour where the purpose or effect is to create a hostile, offensive humiliating or intimidating environment.'  
[*Integrity in Ministry, p1-2*]

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Congregation Leader and Council expects all staff and volunteers to be excellent role models, contribute to discussions about safeguarding and to participate in developing and promoting safe practices.

**The Congregation Leader and Council** are committed to:

- the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults.
- developing, approving, disseminating, evaluating and amending this code as appropriate or required by changes in legislation.
- appointing and supporting a safeguarding officer.
- ensuring regular training in this code , *Integrity in Ministry, Integrity in the Service of the Church and Towards Healing* occurs.



**Staff and volunteers** are required to:

- To be conversant with this code
- To attend training programs in this code
- To challenge unacceptable behaviour and provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow. An environment which allows harassment e.g., bullying, inappropriate shouting or any form of discrimination is unacceptable.
- To use work-based electronic and print media responsibly
- To avoid photographing children when the situation could be construed as intrusive.
- To desist from posting on line unauthorised photographs, movies or videos.
- To respect and comply with regulations as set down by the facility when visiting residents in aged care facilities
- To avoid giving alcohol, cigarettes or drugs to a child or vulnerable adult.
- To avoid any form of over-familiarity or inappropriate language
- To ensure that the privacy of children and vulnerable adults is respected at all times.
- To take reasonable care or avoid tasks of a personal nature e.g. washing or helping with toileting for children if they can undertake these tasks for themselves. All children and vulnerable adults must be treated with due respect.
- To never administer corporal punishment
- To desist from giving personal gifts to a particular child or vulnerable adult.
- To exercise a prudent judgment that has the wellbeing of the other as its goal in initiating and responding to physical contact, such as giving a comforting hug or an affirming touch.

### **REPORTING A BREACH OF THIS CODE OF CONDUCT**

In compliance with this Code of Conduct it is mandatory to report concerns about the conduct of an employee, volunteer or sister working within the Sisters of Mercy, Brisbane Congregation, towards a child or vulnerable adult while accessing the services of the Sisters of Mercy, Brisbane Congregation.

Any concerns should be reported to the Congregation Leader.



## **CONCLUSION**

As Sisters of Mercy, we recognise that justice, tender love and humility before God must determine the response of our congregation to any matter of complaint which may be brought against its members, its employees and its volunteers.

Our Constitutions inspire us in this regard.

*Whatever work we do we join in the search for  
justice and love wherever we are. [Constitutions 4.08]*

<b>Authorised by:</b>	Congregation Leader
<b>Endorsed by:</b>	Congregation Leader & Council
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