



POLICY AND CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

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. Our standards of behaviour and our 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 complements the documents *TH*, *IM*, and *ISC* is intended to assist each member of the Congregation in her personal responsibility to live and minister in harmony with its ideals and values.

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



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- 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 expect all sisters, 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
- ensuring individual sisters have a Police Check and hold a current Positive Notice to Work with Children Care [Blue Card] where necessary.



Sisters are required to:

- be conversant with this code.
- participate in training programs in this code.
- hold membership of the relevant professional association if practising in a professional field [e.g. counselling; spiritual direction] and participate in professional supervision.
- adhere to other relevant professional Codes of Conduct where applicable.
- comply with legislation by holding a current Positive Notice to Work with Children Card [Blue Card] if relevant to the individual's ministry.
- 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.
- avoid any form of over-familiarity or inappropriate language.
- avoid conducting pastoral ministry/counselling in one's residence especially a bedroom.
- provide pastoral ministry only in places that offer a sufficiently safe environment where there is openness and visibility [e.g. Leave door open when alone with child or vulnerable adult].
- notify another adult of the time and place of any meeting with a child or vulnerable adult when meeting alone with a person.
- avoid staying overnight in the same room as a minor or vulnerable person unless it is impossible to avoid. It is prudent to obtain the permission of a parent or guardian if this cannot be avoided.
- avoid giving alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs to a minor or vulnerable adult.
- never administer corporal punishment.
- respect and comply with regulations as set down by the facility when visiting residents in aged care facilities.
- ensure that the privacy of children and vulnerable adults is respected at all times.
- 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.
- never photograph children when the situation could be construed as intrusive.
- avoid posting online unauthorised photographs, movies or videos.
- desist from giving personal gifts to a particular child or vulnerable adult.



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- 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.
- never take a child or vulnerable adult in a car or other vehicle without the presence of another adult or without the written permission from a parent or guardian.

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 a sister, volunteer or employee 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]*

Authorised by:	Congregation Leader
Endorsed by:	Congregation Leader & Council
Implementation date:	5 July, 2016
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