

Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Code of Conduct

Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) commits itself to creating and maintaining an environment which promotes its core values and prevents abuse and sexual exploitation.

CSSA also commits to complying with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards that all Catholic Church Authorities have accepted, which can be found at www.cpsltd.org.au

This Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Code of Conduct applies to all CSSA workers. For the purposes of this document “workers” means anyone who carries out paid or unpaid work or acts as a representative of CSSA. This includes contractors and volunteers.

CSSA workers are expected to contribute to building a harmonious workplace based on team spirit, mutual respect and understanding. All workers are expected to uphold the dignity of those we serve, by ensuring that their personal and professional conduct is of the highest standard at all times in a manner consistent with their role as representatives of CSSA and a positive role model to all.

CSSA takes a “zero-tolerance” attitude to all kinds of physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse, exploitation and deliberate neglect. Abuse and sexual exploitation constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment. All relevant legal steps will be taken corresponding to the legal and social conditions of the local situation.

CSSA workers are responsible for maintaining a professional role with children and adults at risk, which means establishing and maintaining clear professional boundaries that serve to safeguard everyone from misunderstandings or violation of the professional relationship.

It is an expectation that all CSSA representatives behave in accordance with CSSA’s mission and values at all times and will comply with the following requirements.

CSSA Workers shall:

- Treat children and adults at risk with respect regardless of race, colour, gender language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, wealth, disability, birth or other status.
- Make themselves aware of situations that may present risks and pro-actively develop strategies to create safeguards to protect the interests, safety and wellbeing of children and adults at risk.
- Plan and organise any events involving children and adults at risk so that risks are assessed and minimised.
- Avoid showing favouritism to any individual.
- Wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children, and/or with adults at risk.

- Encourage open communication between all children, adults at risk, parents, workers and volunteers and have children and adults at risk participate in decisions that affect them.
- Use language or behaviour that is appropriate and in no way harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- Provide access for children and adults at risk to talk to others about any concerns they have.
- Where a CSSA worker receives information, develops concerns or witnesses an incident regarding abuse or sexual exploitation she/he must report such concerns to the appropriate senior manager and local legal authorities where appropriate. Be diligent in reporting any children or adults at risk who you perceive to be at risk or harm and never trivialise or exaggerate child abuse issues.
- Not assume that someone else will take responsibility for a situation relating to the safety of children and adults at risk.
- Comply with all relevant Australian and local legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour.
- Treat everyone with respect, recognising their right to personal privacy.
- Use any electronic means of communication (this means using computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras and social media) appropriately and not as a means to exploit, harass or place children and adults at risk at risk.
- Obtain informed consent before photographing, filming or audio-recording others. An explanation of how the photograph, film or recording will be used must be understood by all parties involved.
- All efforts to assess compliance with local traditions must be made.
- Ensure file labels, meta data or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about children and adults at risk when sending and/or forwarding images electronically or publishing images in any form.
- Ensure children and adults at risk are adequately clothed and the images present children in a dignified and respectful manner. Images must be honest representations of the context and facts.

CSSA Workers shall not:

- Exchange money, employment, goods, assistance or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour.
- Engage in sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) or adults at risk, regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Neither mistaken belief in the age of a child nor consent amounts to an excuse or defence to such situations.
- Engage in any form of physical punishment/discipline of children or adults at risk, harassment, discrimination, physical or verbal abuse, intimidation, favouritism or exploitative sexual relations.

- Make physical contact (touch) with children or adults at risk unless it is in response to the needs of the person and with their permission. Always avoid contact with the breasts, buttocks and groin. Ensure that actions are open and non-secretive.
- Do things for children or vulnerable adult of a personal nature that they can do for themselves.
- Hold, kiss, cuddle or touch a child or vulnerable person in an inappropriate, unnecessary or culturally insensitive way.
- Hire children and adults at risk for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage.
- Use inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory language when speaking with any individual, and never make sexually suggestive remarks or gestures, even in fun.
- Sleep in close proximity to any children or adults at risk unless it is absolutely necessary, e.g. if nursing a sick child or protecting a young person in which case inform your supervisor/manager and ensure another adult is present, where possible.

I have carefully read this Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Code of Conduct and agree that I understand that the onus is on me, as a person engaged by CSSA to use common sense and implement actions or behaviours that will promote the safeguarding of children and adults at risk.

Note: This Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Code of Conduct is not intended to create any contractual rights or entitlement outside of an employee's contract of employment, and is not intended to apply as terms of an employee's contract of employment.

Statement of Acknowledgment and Acceptance

I agree to undertake to perform my duties in a manner that supports the values and mission of Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) and support the ethos and values of the Catholic Church. I agree to abide by all CSSA policies and procedures currently in place and any alterations made to them from time to time, as well as new ones introduced.

I have carefully read the Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Code of Conduct and I understand that the responsibility is on me, as a person engaged by CSSA, to abide by this policy and report any suspected breaches in accordance with this Code.

Signed by:

Name: (Please Print) _____

Date: _____

Approved by the Board: Date: _____

Records

Please return a copy of the Statement of Acknowledgement and Acceptance CSSA's HR function.

This record will be retained in personnel files.