



Code of Conduct & Ethics

1. Purpose

Guided by the principles of Catholic Social Teachings, this Code of Conduct and Ethics (the Code) describes the standards of conduct and behaviour expected of Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) workers, volunteers, contractors and those who work in partnership with CSSA.

The Code provides a shared, plain English understanding and expectation of the way we behave as individuals, towards each other, those we serve, our partners, donors and associates.

The foundations of our working environment are the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and the Gospel values. The following Catholic Social Teaching principles are intrinsic to all aspects of the work activities of CSSA:

- **Dignity of the human person:** We believe that every person is of great value and worth because each of us is created in God's image. All people have equal dignity and so we reject discrimination on the basis of factors such as age, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, sexual identity, or ability.
- **The common good:** We believe that every person and group should be able to share in the good things of life in society. We look beyond our own personal or group interests and work instead for social inclusion and the good of all.
- **Preferential option for the poor and vulnerable:** We believe that following Jesus' example leads us to a special concern for those who are the poorest, most excluded, disrespected or vulnerable. We give priority to those who are the most powerless or disadvantaged.
- **Solidarity:** We believe we are part of one human family and have a responsibility to care for one another. We try to understand other people's situations and struggles, and to imagine ourselves in their shoes.
- **Participation:** We believe that every person is gifted by God with freedom and has a right to make decisions about their own lives. With freedom comes the responsibility to play an active part in every dimension of life in society.
- **Subsidiarity:** We believe that every person and group has something to offer and a role to play. We keep decision making and responsibility at the smallest, lowest or most local level possible. Higher levels or larger groups should only get involved

when necessary to coordinate different interests or partial perspectives for the sake of the common good.

- **Care for Creation:** We believe that we have a responsibility to love and care for other creatures and all of God's creation. We try to use resources wisely and sustainably considering the integrity of creation, and the common good of the whole human family including generations to come.

2. Scope

This Code applies to all workers (including volunteers, contractors and anyone providing services to CSSA) and CSSA Board Members. All the workers are required to meet professional and ethical standards of behaviour and act in accordance with the mission, vision and values of CSSA.

3. Definitions

Worker

A worker is a paid employee, a member of clergy or religious, a volunteer or any other person carrying out work for CSSA.

Supervisor

The Supervisor is an Agency Head, Director, Manager, Coordinator or Team Leader, who is responsible for the day-to-day supervision of a worker.

4. Code of Conduct

The Code requires all workers to adhere to the standards set out below in their interactions as workers and representatives of CSSA.

The Code also applies to social activities or interactions on social media whether they take place within or outside work premises and work hours if the identity of the person as a worker of CSSA can be linked or inferred and where the activities or comments may have a detrimental financial or reputational impact on CSSA.

All Workers are responsible for applying and complying with this Code. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that their workers are aware of and understand their responsibility under the Code.

All Workers are expected to always:

- Operate with integrity, honesty and respect for each other;
- Treat associates and other members of the public with courtesy and sensitivity;
- Comply with legislative and industrial requirements;

- Operate in a safe and responsible manner; and
- Preserve the environment from harm.

4.1 Compliance with Legislation and Regulations

All workers are expected to comply with legislation as well as the technical and ethical requirements of any relevant regulatory or professional body, which applies to their work within the jurisdiction (State or Territory) in which they work. Those found to have breached any law or regulation may face legal or disciplinary action, including termination. Ignorance of the law or a good intention does not excuse the obligation to comply.

4.2 Professionalism

All Workers are required to comply with this Code and maintain professional and ethical behaviour at all times. The following provides a guide to those professional and ethical standards.

You must respect the dignity, rights and views of others by:

- listening to and seeking to understand different points of view (this does not necessarily mean agreeing with the point of view);
- refraining from all forms of discrimination as required under federal and state legislation;
- not exploiting, abusing, harassing, bullying, intimidating, or acting in a way that is contrary to maintaining harmonious relationships;
- respecting cultural, ethnic and religious differences in both Australia and when overseas;
- upholding CSSA's reputation overseas by respecting the law of the host country, cultural awareness and sensitivity, and appropriate personal behaviour
- appreciating the genuine contributions that others make in meeting CSSA's mission;
- expressing constructive feedback that is considerate and moderate in its tone;
- being courteous, sensitive, and considerate to the needs of others;
- being honest in communications;
- actively managing workplace conflict involving yourself or workers under your supervision to create positive and constructive outcomes; and

- working co-operatively and collaboratively with others to achieve common goals and promote a positive work environment.

4.3 Ethics

You will perform any duties associated with your position diligently, impartially and conscientiously, to the best of your ability. You will:

- keep up to date with advances and changes in the body of knowledge and the professional and ethical standards relevant to your area of expertise;
- carry out your duties diligently and efficiently, exercise care, responsibility and sound judgment;
- ensure procedural fairness is followed in all processes;
- undertake to be mentally and physically fit to carry out your work responsibilities at all times, refrain from carrying out your duties if under the influence of alcohol, any illegal substance, or any drug which impairs your performance or poses a safety risk to yourself or others;
- understand responsibilities and obligations under Work Health & Safety legislation and be proactive in ensuring that the workplace is safe and secure from risks to health and safety and report any incidents, hazards or near misses which you become aware of;
- not tolerate or ignore dishonest behaviour by colleagues or others; and report instances of this sort of behaviour through the standard processes;
- not take or seek to take improper advantage of any official information gained in the course of employment;
- not take improper advantage of your position to benefit yourself or others;
- not allow personal political views/affiliations or other personal interests to detrimentally influence the performance of your duties or exercise of responsibilities;
- if professionally registered, observe all laws, professional codes of conduct and ethics relating to your professional memberships; and
- not use CSSA's internet and email resources for accessing, transmitting, storing or downloading pornographic, sexually explicit or otherwise inappropriate material.

4.4 Safeguarding

CSSA is committed to maintaining a culture of safe and protective environments for all, including our staff, volunteers, contractors, partners and the communities and

individuals we work with, particularly those most vulnerable to exploitation, abuse or exclusion.

CSSA has a zero-tolerance approach to any form of sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment including any form of child abuse or abuse of adults at risks.

All workers who work with children or adults at risk are required to comply with the **CSSA Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Code of Conduct** and comply with additional agency specific safeguarding procedures and guidelines as listed in the Safeguarding Risk Register. An agreement to comply with this Code includes agreement to comply with the CSSA Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Code of Conduct.

Workers will pay particular attention to safeguarding children and adults at risk who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people with particular vulnerabilities, for example, children who can't live at home.

Allegations of any form of exploitation, abuse or harassment will be dealt with through the appropriate CSSA procedures and will be reported to the Police and/or other relevant authorities.

4.5 Acceptance and /or Giving of Gifts or Benefits

It is expected that you will never solicit any gifts or benefits. Nor should you accept gifts or benefits either for yourself or for another person which might in any way, either directly or indirectly, compromise or influence you in your professional capacity.

Gifts of a nominal value generally used for promotional purposes or moderate acts of hospitality offered as a genuine "thank you" by a supporter or partner may be accepted by you as long as they have not been solicited. It is recognised that such gifts are often intended for CSSA and not a specific individual and such gifts should be handed to your Agency Head or Supervisor to accept on behalf of the agency.

Gifts or hospitality offered as an inducement to purchase, provide information or treat favourably are not acceptable regardless of their monetary value. Examples of inducement include a recruitment agency offering theatre tickets for each temporary person employed. Gifts such as a Christmas hamper for work allocated to a consultant should be shared or, if a singular gift (such as a box of chocolates) should be made available for consumption at a work function. Consideration should also be given to donating such gifts to charity.

4.6 Confidentiality

Preserving confidential business information is vital to protect the interests of CSSA, workers and stakeholders. Such confidential information includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Computer processes and data;
- Computer programs and codes;
- Supporter databases and lists;
- Donor information including addresses and donations received;
- Internal financial information on CSSA and its Members;
- Marketing strategies and data; and
- All forms of internal communication.

All workers are required to comply with CSSA's confidentiality requirements as a condition of employment. Even where this statement is not specifically and separately prepared and signed, the condition remains enforceable for all workers. Where the worker is an employee, confidentiality is part of their conditions of employment. A clause regarding confidentiality is included in the Independent Contractor Agreement for contractors. CSSA may require workers with access to sensitive information, such as donor information, to sign a Non-Solicitation Agreement upon employment.

Workers who disclose confidential business information will be subject to disciplinary action which may include termination of employment or engagement. In addition, where any 'reasonable doubt' exists, CSSA reserves the right to contact Police and other relevant organisations to lodge claims for damages incurred, even if the worker themselves does not actually benefit from the disclosed information.

Note that these provisions do not apply in circumstances where a public authority (e.g. law enforcement agencies or WorkCover) has a statutory right to require information in certain circumstances.

4.7 Conflict of Interest

All workers have an obligation to ensure that there is no actual or perceived conflict of interest between your personal interests and professional duties. In general, if any personal advantage is obtained or may be perceived to be obtained, there is potential to bring your actions into question.

Workers will not undertake employment outside working hours that would in any way directly or indirectly compete with the activities of CSSA or which conflicts with their duties or affects their performance.

CSSA permits the employment of qualified family members, domestic partners, significant others and/or similar personal relationship of employees as long as such employment does not create a conflict of interest. In accordance with CSSA's employment practices, the basic criteria for employee selection or promotion shall be suitability for the position based on appropriate qualifications, education, experience, training and past performance, consistent with CSSA needs. Relationships by family, marriage, domestic partnership and/or similar personal relationship shall constitute neither an advantage nor a disadvantage to selection, promotion, salary, or other conditions of employment.

Where a worker has or begins a close personal relationship with another worker (including potential staff and ongoing, maximum term or casual staff, a member of the board, volunteers and contractors) they must disqualify themselves from decisions concerning the appointment, promotion, disciplinary proceedings or any other determination relating to employment conditions, benefits or entitlements for the staff member.

All workers have an obligation once they become aware that there is, or may be, a potential conflict of interest between their personal interest and professional duty (whether real or apparent) to immediately inform a Supervisor and seek guidance on how or if to proceed.

In general, it is not necessary for any worker to obtain permission to be involved in voluntary or unpaid activities. However, where a conflict of interest arises between these activities and official responsibilities, you have an obligation to raise the issue with your Supervisor.

4.8 Relationships

Should a close personal relationship dissolve or be marred in any way, parties are to ensure they remain professional at all times; demonstrating respect of each other's dignity, rights and views and not allow any matters pertaining to their relationship be brought into the workplace or working environment.

5. Duty to report

Workers have a duty to report any concerns regarding breaches of this Code to their Supervisor. If they are not comfortable about reporting to their Supervisor, they should report the matter to another senior manager. Concerns regarding a senior should be reported to the Agency Head. In the case where the Agency Head is the subject of a concern, this should be referred to the governing body (i.e. the CSSA Ltd Board). This should be done verbally or in writing and should include full details and if possible, supporting evidence.

All reported breaches will be treated in confidence as far as reasonably practicable. CSSA is committed to protecting any person who raises concerns about a breach of the Code from retaliation or reprisals.

6. Victimisation

Any attempt to victimise a person who raises a legitimate breach of the Code will be treated seriously and may lead to disciplinary action with penalties that may include a warning or dismissal. Frivolous or vexatious allegations are a serious disciplinary offence and will result in disciplinary action being taken.

7. Breaches of the Code

Any suspected breaches of the Code will be investigated as stated in CSSA procedures (Whistle-blowers, Workplace Investigations, and Managing Misconduct etc.) or any agency specific procedure. Breaches of the Code may lead to disciplinary action including formal warnings or termination of employment. Breaches of this Code include, but are not limited to the following:

- Discrimination whether direct or indirect;
- Disregard of safety procedures;
- Exploitation, abuse or harassment of workers, associates, or our partners, communities or individuals with whom we work;
- Misappropriation of CSSA funds;
- Working whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs in situations where your performance is impaired;
- Offering children or vulnerable people in programs conducted or associated with CSSA or its Members, recreational drugs or alcohol including cigarettes;
- Abuse, theft, assault, including sexual assault and grooming of children, and risk of significant harm to children and adults at risks;
- Offensive, threatening or damaging behaviour;
- Disregard of environmental protection procedures;
- Offering or accepting bribes or similar inducements;
- Conduct that could bring CSSA or any of its workers, partners and associates into disrepute, including through use of social media;
- Theft or misuse of the property of CSSA, its agencies or its associates or partners;
- Misrepresentation of CSSA credentials, policies or capabilities;

- Misuse of information or material obtained from CSSA or its Members;
- Disregard of local law of a host country; and
- Failing to report a situation where you have been charged with an offence, or convicted of an offence carrying a penalty of 12 months or more in prison.

8. What happens if there is a Breach of the Code?

There are a range of consequences for breaches of this Code depending on the nature and seriousness of the matter. Supervisors have a responsibility to address the alleged breaches of the Code promptly, and in a fair and reasonable manner. They need to assess the seriousness of any alleged breaches, and how they should be dealt with.

Possible outcomes for a worker who has breached the Code may be:

- Mediation between parties involved with an aim towards mutual understanding and resolution;
- Issuing a written apology;
- Official warning;
- Counselling;
- Performance improvement plans;
- Formal disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment;
- Referral to the relevant registration board when the staff member holds a professional membership; and
- Referral to an external Agency or the Police.