

SISTERS OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN FOUNDATION LIMITED

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Introduction

The Sisters of the Good Samaritan Foundation Ltd (**GSF**) is dedicated to promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children. We maintain a zero-tolerance stance on abuse of children and adults at risk. This policy outlines our commitment to ensuring the protection of children, young people and adults at risk by equipping all personnel who interact with children with the necessary training and skills to implement these safeguards.

Definitions

- *Adult at risk*: any individual over the age of 18 years who has needs for care and support; who is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing, abuse or neglect; and who is unable to protect themselves from experiencing, or the risk of experiencing, abuse or neglect.
- *Child*: Any individual under the age of 18 years.
- *Child Protection*: Responsibilities, measures, or activities aimed at safeguarding children from harm.
- *Child Abuse*:
 - A sexual offence involving a child, irrespective of whether legal proceedings have begun or concluded.
 - Sexual misconduct involving a child.
 - Physical violence involving a child.
 - Behavior causing significant emotional or psychological harm, or neglecting a child.
- *Child Sexual Assault*: Acts exposing or involving a child in sexual processes beyond their understanding or against accepted community standards. This includes, but is not limited to, genital fondling, masturbation, oral sex, penetration, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposure to pornography. It also includes grooming, intended to lower a child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity.
- *Reasonable Grounds for Belief*: A belief formed based on known considerations or facts assessed objectively, indicating that child abuse has occurred. This belief is more than a rumor or speculation but does not require proof.
- *Reasonable Belief*: Formed if a reasonable person in the same position would hold the belief on the same grounds, such as:
 - A child reports being abused.
 - A child reports knowing someone who has been abused (potentially referring to themselves).
 - Someone knowledgeable about the child reports abuse.
 - Professional observations of the child indicate potential abuse.
 - Signs of abuse are evident.

Purpose

The policy aims to:

- Ensure all GSF personnel understand the GSF's commitment to a child and adults at risk safe environment.
- Prevent abuse within the GSF.
- Foster a culture of safety.
- Define responsibilities for identifying, preventing, and detecting abuse.
- Guide personnel on actions to take when suspecting abuse.
- Explicitly forbid any form of abuse.
- Assure that all suspected abuse will be reported and investigated.

GSF's Principles

- **Commitment:** GSF is dedicated to the best interests of children, creating a safe and friendly environment.
- **Equality:** Every person has equal rights to protection from abuse, regardless of gender, race, beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or background.
- **Responsibility:** Child and adult at risk protection is a shared duty among all staff, contractors, volunteers, and the community.
- **Cultural Safety:** Special attention is given to the cultural safety of indigenous children, children from diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, children identifying as LGBTQ+, and those in care or the justice system.
- **Immediate Risk:** Contact police immediately if a person is at immediate risk.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, contractors, and volunteers in any context where they might interact with children, young people and adults at risk in delivering GSF's services.

Code of Conduct

All personnel must maintain professional boundaries, behaving consistently with their roles and as positive role models. They must follow the GSF's Child and Adult at Risk Safety Code of Conduct which specifically bans sexual relations with children and child labour.

Risk Management

GSF integrates child and adult at risk safety into its risk management strategy, with assessments for all activities and projects involving children and adults at risk. Mitigation strategies are applied and monitored for identified risks.

Communication and Use of Children's Images

Guidelines for using children's images include:

- Respecting local traditions or restrictions.
- Obtaining informed consent from children and their guardians.

- Using images respectfully and appropriately.
- Ensuring honest representation and protecting identifying information.

Personnel Recruitment and Selection

GSF follows stringent child-safe recruitment practices to ensure the safest and most suitable people are engaged. This includes:

- Promoting child and adult at risk safety in job advertisements.
- Detailed application forms and job descriptions.
- Assessing risk levels for positions involving contact with children and adults at risk.
- Criminal record checks and Working with Children Checks where applicable.
- Behavioural-based interview questions and thorough reference checks.
- Verification of identity and qualifications.
- Including child and adult at risk protection in performance reviews.
- Acknowledgement of GSF's Child and Adults at Risk Protection Policy and Code of Conduct.
- Reserving the right to refuse or terminate employment for any risk to children or adults at risk.

Educating the Foundation

GSF is committed to educating all personnel on child and adult at risk protection and abuse prevention, promoting safe practices, and informing the communities they work in about protection measures and reporting mechanisms.

Working with Partners

The Foundation ensures that partners are child and adult at risk safe organisations, including child and adult at risk protection policies and codes of conduct in all partnership agreements.

Programs with Direct Contact with Children and Adults at Risk

Specific guidelines manage protection risks in programs involving direct contact with children and adults at risk, including:

- Screening gifts and correspondence.
- Ensuring volunteers supply references and undergo safeguarding training.
- Always having staff present.
- Not inviting or taking children or adults at risk away from their communities.

Reporting

All GSF personnel must report safety concerns to their supervisor or the Executive Director immediately. If there is suspicion of involvement by supervisors or the Executive Director, the matter should be escalated to the Board Chair. Reportable conduct includes sexual offences, misconduct, physical violence, emotional harm, and neglect.

Support following a complaint being reported

We recognise that a complaint of reportable conduct is made requires an immediate and compassionate response for all those involved.

This requires GSF to consider and where necessary to implement:

- Support to the child or (children) about who the concern relates to. Their immediate safety is to be ensured, following which ongoing support in the form of counselling or other forms of support should be offered.
- Support to the person who is the subject of the reported conduct. Counselling and other forms of support should be offered as appropriate in recognition of the fact that all individuals are entitled to the presumption of innocence and being the subject of a complaint can be a stressful process.
- Support to the individual/s who raised the report. There should be no retribution or repercussion to those who have raised a concern and the need for those individuals to receive counselling should also be considered and offered when appropriate.

Investigating

GSF personnel are encouraged to cooperate with investigations by child protection services or police. GSF (or their delegates) may also conduct internal investigations if appropriate and non-conflicting with official investigations.

Responding

If an offence or policy breach is alleged, the concerned individual may be stood down during the investigation. Disciplinary action, including dismissal, may follow if the investigation substantiates the allegations.

Involving Children and Young People

GSF values the input of children and youth, seeking their feedback and incorporating their views into policies and programs. This will be achieved by creating an environment where every child feels welcome, supported and safe to speak about concerns. In our daily practice we strive to build a culture of safeguarding for all by ensuring children's opinions matter.

We listen and observe and acknowledge their feelings and aim to engage with children and youth in any periodic reviews of this policy for their input and during periodic reviews of programs.

Children who receive assistance from any GSF programs are to be informed about abuse reporting processes. This is to be achieved by ensuring that a simplified version of this policy is to be made available to all children who receive assistance from GSF programs. Such simplified policies are to be provided in the relevant language and using age appropriate language to ensure it is properly understood.

Reviewing

GSF reviews its child protection policies every two years or after any reportable incident to ensure ongoing effectiveness in protecting children.

For any immediate child protection concerns, contact the police. For other concerns, contact the following as relevant:

Australian Based Concerns

GSF's Executive Director at smears@goodsamsfoundation.org.au or 02 8752 5313

Kiribati Based Concerns

GSF's Executive Director at smears@goodsamsfoundation.org.au or 02 8752 5313

Sister Michelle Reid, Member of Good Samaritan Council for Kiribati at

mreid@goodsams.org.au

Sister Taabeia Ibouri, Safeguarding Coordinator at tibouri@goodsams.org.au

Philippines Based Concerns

GSF's Executive Director at smears@goodsamsfoundation.org.au or 02 8752 5313

Sister Meg Kahler, Member of Good Samaritan Council for Philippines at

mkahler@goodsams.org.au

Sister Anne Dixon, Safeguarding Coordinator at adixon@goodsams.org.au

Timor Leste Based Concerns

GSF's Executive Director at smears@goodsamsfoundation.org.au or 02 8752 5313

Fr Roberto SJ at encarnacao4@gmail.com

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES, VOLUNTEERS AND CONTRACTORS WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Policy Objective

This Child Safety Code of Conduct sets out the Foundation's commitment to ensuring it discharges the obligations and expectations.

Child Safety Code of conduct

Staff, volunteers and contractors at the Foundation are required to abide by the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

The Foundation recognises, respects and promotes its responsibilities to keep children safe from abuse, and commits to ensuring the safety of children as a first priority. The Foundation values diversity and will not tolerate child abuse or discriminatory practices.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It is intended to complement the Foundation's other related policies and procedures.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct applies to the broad range of situations where interaction with children and young people may occur in the delivery of the Foundation services, including through digital technology and social media.

The Executive Director will:

1. be responsible for the overall welfare and wellbeing of staff and volunteers;
2. be accountable for managing and maintaining a duty of care towards staff and volunteers; and
3. nominate a child protection officer to provide information and support to all staff, volunteers, children, young people and their carers regarding child protection matters.

All people involved in the care of children on behalf of the Foundation will:

1. refrain from engaging in any and all forms of child abuse, including but not limited to sexual behaviour, physical abuse and exploiting children through the use of child labour;
2. work towards achieving the aims and purposes of the Foundation;
3. be responsible for relevant administration of programmes and activities in their area;
4. maintain a duty of care towards others involved in these programmes and activities;
5. take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse and harm;

6. establish and maintain a child-safe environment for children and young people in the course of their work;
7. be fair, considerate and honest in their dealings with others;
8. work with children in an open and transparent way;
9. treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas and opinions
10. encourage children to participate in matters important to them;
11. act as positive role models in their conduct with children and young people and model appropriate adult behaviour;
12. listen to children and respond to their needs appropriately;
13. be professional in their actions;
14. maintain strict impartiality;
15. comply with the Foundation's guidelines on physical contact with children;
16. respect the privacy of children and their families, teachers and carers, and disclose information about them only to people who have a need to know;
17. operate within the policies and guidelines of the Foundation, including adhering to the Child Protection Policy, at all times;
18. report any allegations of child abuse; and
19. contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse (phone 000).

Staff, volunteers and contractors shall work to prevent discrimination and actively promote the participation and inclusion of all children, recognising in particular:

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people;
2. children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
3. children with a disability;
4. children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans;
5. children who are intersex, non-binary or gender diverse; or
6. children in and out of home care and the youth justice system.

Staff, volunteers and contractors shall not:

1. engage in any form of child abuse, including but not limited to sexual behaviour, physical abuse and exploiting children through the use of child labour;
2. shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade children or young people;
3. unlawfully discriminate against any child or young person, including because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability;
4. seek to use children in any way to meet the needs of adults;
5. ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosure of child abuse or harm;

6. engage in any activity with a child or young person that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them;
7. initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves; e.g. toileting or changing clothes;
8. be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily and for more than a very short time;
9. develop a “special” relationship with a specific child or young person for their own needs;
10. show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention;
11. arrange contact, including online contact, with children or young people outside of the organisation’s programs and activities;
12. have unauthorised contact with children and young people in person, online or by phone;
13. photograph or video a child or young person without the consent of the child and their parents or guardians;
14. work with children or young people while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs;
15. engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children;
16. use inappropriate language or behaviour, including discriminatory or oppressive language or behaviour, in the presence of children; and
17. do anything in contravention of the Foundation’s policies, procedures or this Code of Conduct.