

Document:	Safeguarding Policy
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Commitment to Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable People

The Institute is actively committed to fostering communities of safeguarding that recognize the inherent rights and dignity of all people and the gospel imperative to protect and nurture all children and those who are vulnerable. Consequently, the Institute is committed to creating and maintaining environments, both real and online, that are safe, supportive, caring and nurturing for all children and vulnerable people. By adopting a zero tolerance of abuse approach, we commit ourselves to safeguarding children and vulnerable people from all forms of abuse and neglect. In keeping with our Constitutions, and Church protocols such as Integrity in Ministry, Towards Healing, Integrity in the Service of the Church and Protocol for Right Relationships in Ministry, we strive to maintain the safety of all children and vulnerable people with whom we come into contact.

More specifically, we are committed to safeguarding the children and vulnerable people in our ministry organisations, online and in those places where we work, volunteer or journey with people in our mission of mercy.

Supporting this policy are numerous expressions of our safeguarding commitment:

- A Code of Conduct which is required to be signed by every sister, staff member, volunteer and long-term contractor.
- A Safeguarding Training procedure to outline training responsibilities for all those within the scope of this Policy.
- Protected Disclosure procedures.
- Guidelines, risk assessments and checklists applying to different activities.

These are all listed in the Schedule to this Policy.

Responsibilities and Obligations

We have an obligation to take reasonable care for our own safety and the safety of children and vulnerable people with whom we come into contact. Our safeguarding responsibility is a shared one at all levels of the organisation.

These obligations will arise from the specific role and responsibilities of the person and may include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Embedding a culture of safety and respect in ISMAPNG's leadership, governance and practice.
- Prioritising the safety and best interests of the children and vulnerable adults with whom we work. We plan, organise and review all activities with children, proactively considering potential risks and strive to ensure risks are reduced, and eliminated where possible.
- Everyone is encouraged to communicate any area of concern or identify where our approach may need improvement.
- Understanding the nature and risks of abuse and taking deliberate and immediate steps to prevent it. In particular, we actively seek to become and remain informed of the causes and signs of child abuse and neglect.
- Encouraging the participation of children, vulnerable adults, families and communities in providing feedback on and input into decision making about safety. We listen to the voices of children as we constantly strive to remain vigilant and make improvements.
- Responding to complaints of abuse sensitively, respectfully, actively and in a timely manner, in accordance with our lawful obligations and our own policies and procedures. This includes contacting police immediately where there may be an immediate risk of harm to any person, especially to any child or vulnerable adult.
- Undertaking regular internal and external auditing of our safeguarding policies and practices to ensure an ongoing culture of safety and respect for all.
- Providing adequate supervision.
- Following procedures relating to child and vulnerable person's safety, welfare, and well-being (for example, reporting procedures).
- Demonstrating personal behaviours that promote the safety, welfare and well-being of children and vulnerable persons as outlined in the Code of Conduct.
- Providing medical assistance (if competent to do so) or seeking assistance from a medically trained person to aid a child or vulnerable person who is injured or becomes sick.
- Protecting a child or vulnerable person from known hazards that pose a risk of harm and which can be reasonably predicted.
- Taking appropriate action where a child or a vulnerable person's safety, welfare or well-being is at risk.

Our duty of care to children and to vulnerable people applies during all activities and functions conducted or arranged by ISMAPNG, including engagement in online environments, where children or vulnerable persons are in our care.

Actual harm to a child or a vulnerable person, or potential to cause significant harm to a child or a vulnerable person, caused by:

- (a) a single serious failure to exercise appropriate duty of care; or
- (b) repeated less serious failures to exercise appropriate duty of care,

may constitute misconduct, neglect or negligence and/or a breach of this policy.

Scope

This policy applies to all sisters, staff, volunteers and long-term contractors of ISMAPNG and its Corporate Entities.

Definitions

“**Child**” means any person under the age of 18 years

“**Corporate Entities**” means Institute Property Association Limited, McAuley Property Limited, Mercy Sisters Ltd and The Sisters of Mercy of Papua New Guinea Inc.

ISMAPNG means Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea, a religious institute of pontifical right and a public juridic person within the Catholic Church.

“**Vulnerable person**” refers to any person aged 18 years and above who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason.

Schedule

Related documents and procedures:

Code of Conduct

Training Procedures

Protected Disclosure Procedures

Computer Systems and Electronic Communications Policy

Version Control

Version Control			
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