

<b>Document:</b>	<b>Safeguarding Policy</b>
<b>Reference No:</b>	
<b>Area(s):</b>	<b>The Institute and Corporate Entities</b>
<b>Version:</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<b>Date of next review:</b>	<b>July 2023</b>

## Introduction

God's Word, living and active, compels us  
"to act justly to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God". (Micah 6:8)

and 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 Policy (the Policy) expresses our commitment to live and work in accordance with the Gospel ideals and the values and principles as articulated in the *Constitutions of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea* (the Institute).

## Commitment to Safeguarding Children & Adults at risk

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 adults at risk. 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 adults at risk. By adopting a zero tolerance of abuse approach, we commit to safeguarding children and adults at risk from all forms of abuse and neglect. In keeping with our Constitutions, and Church protocols such as the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, Integrity in Ministry, Integrity in the Service of the Church and Protocol for Right Relationships in Ministry (Papua New Guinea), we strive to maintain the safety of all children and adults at risk with whom we come into contact.

More specifically, we are committed to safeguarding children and adults at risk in our ministry, 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 outlining 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**

There is an obligation to take particular care for the safety of children and adults at risk with whom we come into contact. Our safeguarding responsibility is a shared one at all levels of the Institute.

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 children and adults at risk with whom we work and minister. We plan, organize and review all activities proactively considering potential risks and strive to ensure risks are reduced and eliminated where possible especially with children and adults at risk.
- 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, adults at risk, families, and communities in providing feedback on and input into decision making about safety. We listen to the voices of children and adults at risk 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 imminent risk of harm to any person, especially to any child or adult at risk.
- 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 of those who engage in activities with children and adults at risk.
- Following procedures relating to child and adults at risk's safety, welfare, and well-being (For example, reporting procedures).
- Demonstrating personal behaviours that promote the safety, welfare and well-being of children and adults at risk 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 adult at risk who is injured or becomes ill.
- Protecting a child or adult at risk from known hazards that pose a risk of harm, and which can be reasonably predicted.
- Taking appropriate action where a child or adult at risk is unsafe, or their welfare or well-being is at risk.

Our duty of care to children and to adults at risk applies during all activities and functions conducted or arranged by the Institute, including engagement in online environments.

Actual harm to a child or adult at risk, or potential to cause significant harm to a child or adult at risk, 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.

## Consequences of breach of this Policy

- Any breach of the Safeguarding Policy or Code of Conduct should be referred to the Safeguarding Officer for further action.
- A breach of the Safeguarding Policy and/or Code of Conduct is a disciplinary matter which may result in a formal warning or suspension from ministry or service. Serious breaches of the Safeguarding policy or Code of Conduct may result in dismissal for employees and volunteers, or in the case of religious, disciplinary action, in accordance with our Constitutions and the canonical processes.

## Scope

This policy applies to all sisters, staff, volunteers, and long-term contractors of the Institute and its Corporate Entities as listed below.

## Definitions

**The Institute** 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.

**Corporate Entities** means Institute Property Association Limited, McAuley Property Limited, Mercy Sisters Ltd, The Sisters of Mercy of Papua New Guinea Inc., Mercy Support Ltd, McAuley Ministries Ltd and Catherine McAuley Services Ltd.

**Adult at risk** 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.

**Child** means any person under the age of 18 years.

**Child abuse** or maltreatment is defined as an act (or series of acts) that endangers a child's physical or emotional health or development and/or a failure to provide conditions to the extent that the health and development of the child or young person is significantly impaired or placed at risk.

Examples of abuse and maltreatment include:

- physical abuse refers to any non-accidental physically aggressive act towards a child or adult at risk. Physical abuse may be intentional or may be the inadvertent result of physical punishment. Physically abusive behaviours include shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning and kicking.
- sexual abuse refers to a person who uses power, force or authority to involve a child or adult at risk in any form of unwanted or illegal sexual activity. This can involve touching or no contact at all. This may take the form of taking sexually explicit photographs or videos of children or adults at risk, forcing children or adults at risk to watch or take part in sexual acts and forcing or coercing children or adults at risk to have sex or engage in sexual acts with other children or adults.

- **grooming** refers to a pattern of behaviour aimed at engaging a child or adult at risk as a precursor to sexual abuse. It includes establishing a 'special' friendship/relationship with the child or adult at risk. Grooming can include the conditioning of parents and other adults to think that the relationship with the child or adult at risk is 'normal' and positive. The process can take as little as a few days or as long as months or even years.
- **neglect** refers to a failure by a caregiver to provide the basic requirements for meeting the physical and emotional developmental needs of a child or adult at risk. Physically neglectful behaviours include a failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, supervision, hygiene or medical attention.
- **psychological abuse** refers to inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts and a failure to provide adequate non-physical nurture or emotional availability. Psychologically abusive behaviours include rejecting, ignoring, isolating, terrorising, corrupting, verbal abuse and belittlement.
- **Spiritual abuse** refers to the abuse of a child or adult at risk that is perpetrated by an individual in a position of authority and trust within the Church, supposedly in the name of God. It can cause a child or adult at risk to have lifelong loss of faith and/or feel distanced from the Church.
- **exposure to family violence** is generally considered to be a form of psychologically abusive behaviour, where a child or adult at risk is present (hearing or seeing) while a parent or sibling is subjected to physical abuse, sexual abuse or psychological maltreatment, or is visually exposed to the damage caused to persons or property by a family member's violent behaviour.
- **discrimination and bullying** are examples of other forms of mistreatment that may impact a person physically and/or emotionally. Some examples of discrimination/bullying include a person or group of people repeatedly acting unreasonably towards another person; the behaviour creates a risk to health and safety. Unreasonable behaviour includes victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening.

## Schedule

Related documents and procedures:

[Code of Conduct](#)

[Safeguarding Training Procedures](#)

[Complaints Management Policy](#)

[Complaints Management Procedure](#)

[Mandatory Reporting Policy](#)

[Computer Systems and Electronic Communications](#)

## Version Control

<b><u>Version Control</u></b>			
<b>Document description</b>	Safeguarding Policy		
<b>Document applies to</b>	Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea and the Corporate Entities listed		
<b>Content Manager</b>	Senior Advisor, Safeguarding		
<b>Sponsor</b>	Executive Director ISMAPNG		
<b>Document approved by</b>	Institute Leadership Team		
<b>Creation date</b>	September 2018		
<b>Version control</b>		Date	Document created
	1.0	05/05/2020	
		08/09/2020	
	2.0	July 2021	Document updated
	Date of next review	July 2023	