

Missionaries of God's Love Volunteer / Staff Members Policy

PURPOSE

- This policy outlines the steps in engaging a volunteer or staff member to perform a task for the Missionaries of God's Love, either assisting in administration, teaching in the formation program or in a particular ministry
- For the purpose of this policy, a volunteer means a person who is not paid for his/her contribution
- A staff member means a person employed and receiving payment for his/her contribution
- Child safety must be a key focus in the selection and engagement process for new volunteers and staff members

COMMITMENT

The Missionaries of God's Love leadership is committed to:

- Ensuring that volunteers and staff members are committed to child safeguarding
- Ensuring that volunteers and staff members are protected and not exploited
- Ensuring that volunteers and staff members are provided with healthy and safe working environments
- Ensuring that volunteers and staff members understand their role and responsibilities

ENGAGING A VOLUNTEER OR

STAFF MEMBER

- Recruitment of volunteers and staff members is from persons already known or highly recommended to the MGL. We do not usually publicly advertise for staff or volunteers. However, when we are letting our circle of friends of the MGL know that we are seeking help either for volunteers or staff, we include in the communication:

"We are seeking applicants who are able to demonstrate an understanding of appropriate behaviours when engaging children or young people"

And/or "MGL promotes the safety and wellbeing of children from culturally diverse backgrounds and encourages applications from people of culturally diverse background"

In some cases it will be helpful to include "MGL promotes the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and encourages applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples".

- From the outset we make it clear to an applicant that MGL has child safety as highest priority and we have a zero tolerance approach to child abuse
- Our position description, selection criteria, interviews and reference checks articulate that children are valued and respected, we are committed to child safety, and sensitive to child's developmental needs and culturally safe practices
- Together with two other trusted, competent brothers or staff members the Moderator, Mission Head, or Formation Leader interviews a prospective volunteer or staff member. His/her suitability for a particular role is assessed by asking some of these questions (some questions may not be appropriate depending on the envisaged degree of involvement with children):
 - > *In your previous work or voluntary experience, did you work with children? What was most challenging about that work? What was most rewarding?*
 - > *What elements contribute to a safe and caring environment for children?*
 - > *What strategies do you use when engaging children? Give a practical example of how this has worked in the past?*
 - > *How would you describe appropriate professional boundaries in relation to children in the context of this role? How do you ensure you maintain those boundaries?*
 - > *Tell us about your experience working with children and families from culturally diverse backgrounds. How have you been able to build trust and cultural understanding?*

- > *This ministry has a clear and unwavering commitment to upholding the dignity of every child we come into contact with. How do you see yourself demonstrating this commitment through your actions and interactions with children, parents and colleagues?*
- > *This position involves working with children from 10 to 18 years of age – tell us a little of your experience working with children of different ages – what strategies do you use, how do you actively listen and seek their input into your planning, how do you know you have met their needs?*
- > *Have you ever faced an ethical dilemma in the workplace? If so, what was the issue and what did you do?*
- > *Have you had experience of needing to mediate child-to-child bullying? What did you do?*
- > *Have you had experience working with children from other cultural backgrounds? What would you consider important in this regard.*
- > *This role is focused on working with children – how do you go about keeping parents and carers informed and involved appropriately?*
- > *What would children you have worked with in the past say about you?*
- > *What action would you take if a child disclosed to you that they are feeling unsafe or threatened?*
- > *Have you ever been investigated for a workplace misconduct incident related to working with children?*
- > *Have you ever been charged or convicted of a child-related offence?*
- > *Are there any aspects of this role or the broader ministry or MGL as a whole that you don't understand or would like clarification about?*

VALUES BASED INTERVIEWING

Interviewing should carefully assess the suitability of applicants for volunteer or staff positions. Some areas necessary to assess:

- Motivation to work with children, or to be involved with children
- Understanding of professional boundaries
- Understanding of children's physical and emotional needs
- Understanding of cultural diversity and particular concerns related children coming from ATSI or other cultural backgrounds
- Attitudes to children's rights and how they can be upheld
- Values: honesty, integrity, reliability, fairness and non-discrimination
- Attitudes towards working with children, or to be involved with children

USE OF REFEREE CHECK

In assessing volunteers and staff members referee checks must be used to confirm and verify information gathered from the application, resume, interview and to check whether there are any inconsistencies.

Sample questions for referee checking:

- > *How long have you known the applicant and in what capacity?*
- > *Check if the referee understands the nature of the role, and if not, provide information regarding the MGL, the role, the ministry, especially in relation to working with children*
- > *Please comment on his/her skills and qualities you believe would make him/her suitable to work in an environment which may involve contact with children at times (of only occasional contact with children) or will involve directly working with children or young people.*

- > *In your view and in relation to this role, what do you see as his/her strengths and weaknesses?*
- > *What do you think makes this person a good fit for this role/ministry*
- > *Can you comment on his/her reliability, accountability, trustworthiness, attitude towards children and relationships with colleagues?*
- > *Have you had any concerns with his/her performance especially in relation to work with children?*
- > *If yes, please explain when these issues were identified. When were they discussed with the individual? What work is he/she doing to improve and what progress has been made?*
- > *As far as you know has he/she ever experienced any issues (including health related) which may affect his/her work, especially in relation to his/her interaction with children? If yes, please describe the issues and/or circumstances.*
- > *As far as you are aware, has this person ever been charged with, or convicted of, a criminal offence?*
- > *To the best of your knowledge, is there any reason this person would be considered unsuitable to work in this role.*
- > *Tell me what it is like to work with this person?*
- > *What else do I need to know about this applicant that I haven't already asked?*

RECORDS

The Moderator/Mission Head/Formation Leader issues a letter of appointment and ask the volunteer or staff member to acknowledge the terms and conditions. The letter will include the duration of the appointment.

A Register of Volunteers and Staff is held in MGL Central Office at 6 Boake Pl., Garran. ACT.2605. This register contains the nature of the work being done and the role of the volunteer or staff member.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS

All volunteer/ staff members are required to have a valid *Working With Children Check*. Staff members who are trusted with money, keys or classified documents are required to obtain a national police check as a condition of employment.

In missions where a working with children check is not required (e.g. in missions in countries other than Australia) all efforts should be made to make other background checks prior to volunteers or staff work with children

The central register of volunteers and staff members keeps a record of all WWCC and police checks. This record is checked every 6 months to monitor when WWCC or police checks are due to lapse. If the clearance is still relevant MGL administration advises the volunteer/staff member to renew the card. The renewal is followed up until finalized.

If a volunteer or a staff member has an allegation substantiated or a conviction of child abuse the MGL should advise the relevant authority that the WWCC should be cancelled.

The Moderator/Mission Head/Formation Leader issues a letter of appointment and ask the volunteer or staff member to acknowledge the terms and conditions. The letter will include the duration of the appointment.

The volunteer is required to have a valid *Working With Children Check*.

The Safeguarding Coordinator keeps a *Register of Volunteers*.

INDUCTION

New volunteers or staff members must undergo an induction program before commencing their task or as soon as possible after it has begun. The Moderator/ Head of mission or Leader of Formation organises the induction with the advice of the Safeguarding Coordinator, and the following topics are covered:

- Charism of MGL
- Zero tolerance for child sexual abuse
- Job Description
- MGL Child Safeguarding Policy
- MGL Code of Conduct – including how to respond to a disclosure of harm from a child
- MGL Child Safety Complaint Handling Policy – including how to respond to a complaint about inappropriate behavior towards children, reporting obligations, including reporting to the police, child protection authorities, reportable conduct schemes and any other relevant agencies
- MGL Risk Management for Child Safety – including highlighting where the higher risks are in the particular ministry or position the person is entering, and understanding the strategies needed to minimize risk of harm to children
- MGL E-safety policies – training in E- safety relevant to the ministry
- MGL Information Sharing and Record Keeping Policy – including the requirement that all records are kept centrally, the conditions of access, and the length of time they are kept.

Attendance at the induction program is recorded. At the end of the program the volunteer or staff member is required to sign an acknowledgment of attendance and to sign the Code of Conduct Declaration. These are kept in the register.

The Induction program will be reviewed annually to ensure that it is up to date with legislative changes and other developments in child protection within both the Church and civil society.

PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

A performance review will be conducted annually on all volunteers and staff in regard to their safeguarding responsibilities relevant to their role (See Volunteer/ staff Performance Review). The volunteer or staff member completes a self-evaluation. The Supervisor also does an evaluation of the person. Then the person meets with the Supervisor to work on any needed improvement strategy.

ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

Volunteers and staff are required to attend on-going safeguarding training organised by Missionaries of God's Love. An annual refresher will be given at the beginning of each year. This training refreshes volunteers and staff in their practical commitment to child safety and updates them on any developments in legislative reform, increasing expertise and other contemporary requirements.

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