

Safeguarding Code of Conduct

The Missionaries of God's Love is committed to fostering the dignity, self-esteem and integrity of children and providing them with a safe, supportive and enriching environment to develop spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially.

Purpose

This Code of Conduct has a specific focus on the safeguarding of children against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect.

The Code Aims to:

1. Clarify the expectations of MGL members and co-workers when engaging with children
2. Set out the MGL expectations on professional and personal conduct when relating to children, promoting integrity and ethical behaviour, and to guide MGL members and co-workers when dealing with children
3. Make clear the duty and responsibility that MGL members and co-workers have to promote and maintain a child safe environment and culture that cares for all persons
4. This Code is supplemented by individual ministry policies

Care for Children

MGL members and co-workers must be aware that the Code applies regardless of:

- where or when the interaction with a child occurs i.e. during ministry times or outside of ministry times
- the age of the child
- the consent of the child
- the consent of parents/guardians and families; or
- any circumstances in which a child initiates an interaction or relationship with them.

MGL members and co-workers must be mindful of the inherent power imbalance that exists between them and children. This imbalance includes difference in age, maturity, physical size, life experience and position. But in the case of consecrated brothers and priests there is a further power imbalance due to the way the child views the minister as representing God.

Abuse arises from the misuse of authority or power, including religious authority. Any form of child abuse is unacceptable.

Interactions with Children

When relating with children the following rules are mandatory for MGL members and co-workers.

Use of Speech

- Use of appropriate language and tone toward children and others. Rude or insulting behaviour, including verbal aggression; abusive, threatening or derogatory language or conduct; or intimidating words or actions towards children is unacceptable. It is also unacceptable to engage in such conduct towards others in the presence of children.

Physical Contact

- inappropriate contact, such as hitting or acting in ways that may cause a child to reasonably fear that unjustified force will be used against them e.g. intentional or unjustified use of physical force, throwing an object at a child in hostile way, restraining a child unreasonably, pushing, pulling, shoving, grabbing, pinching, poking, shaking or throwing a child
- other inappropriate conduct would be intimidating the child, shaking or forcibly handling the child, swearing, using sarcasm to humiliate, using names or nick-names to undermine the person, locking the child in a confined space
- reasonable use of physical contact for appropriate control may be necessary e.g. disarming a child who is at risk of harming themselves or another person; separating children who are fighting

Discrimination and Diversity

MGL members and co-workers must not discriminate against any child because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability. They must be committed to creating and maintaining an environment which promotes the safety and inclusivity of all children, including children with a disability, and those with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

They will ensure cultural safety particularly to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children. Where possible members and co-workers will seek advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people about how best to be inclusive and culturally sensitive. They will listen carefully to this advice, fostering open and respectful dialogue. When planning activities or seeking to assist children the MGL members and co-workers will include the local elders in decision-making processes.

Sexually Inappropriate Behaviour

MGL members and co-workers must not engage in sexual misconduct with, or in the presence of children.

Sexual misconduct has a wide range of activity. It includes the following behaviours, but is not limited to these:

- making sexually explicit comments or engaging in sexual jokes, innuendos, or coarse language
- engaging in conversation with children about sexual matters unless in a controlled lecture or seminar situation, or in a sharing group on a weekend in which another adult is present
- touching or embracing children in any way that could be misconstrued as sexually suggestive
- encouraging or failing to discourage romantic or inappropriate advances
- engaging in explicit sexual contact with a child e.g. touching genitals, buttocks, or breast area
- kissing, fondling, sexual penetration
- exploiting a child through prostitution
- exposing children to sexual behaviour of others or images of nudity
- watching children undress
- committing any sexual offence, including indecent assault, sexual assault, possession/dissemination/production of child pornography or child abuse material.

Appropriate Boundaries

MGL members and co-workers must:

- Avoid going home or staying at home with a child where you would be together alone.
- Not bring a child home to your residence.

- When staying in a family home never share a bedroom with a child, even when the parents recommend it.
- When assigned to care for a child or children make sure at least one other adult is present. If there are female youth always have a woman present.
- If a young person wants to speak with you personally do so in a place that is visible to adults.
- Avoid being alone with a child in sleeping, dressing or bathing areas.
- Avoid joining in physical contact with young people when swimming.
- When praying with young people in ministry situations always have another adult present with you. Avoid males only praying with females.
- Avoid transporting a child to an event or home from an event. When organising an event make arrangements for the transportation of children by parents or by a transport company or by others in private vehicles known to the parents.
- Under no circumstances should a child stay overnight in any MGL residence. Children may be accommodated for a weekend on a mission base but this must be separate from the brothers' quarters and have their own showers and toilets.
- In ministry situations involving overnight stays the adult team must have its own bedroom, shower and toilet arrangements separate from the children.

Grooming

MGL members and co-workers must avoid grooming and be alert to where they may suspect another adult is grooming a child.

- Grooming includes actions deliberately taken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a particular child for the purpose of lowering the child's inhibitions.
- It happens when an adult communicates, by words and actions, with a child with the intention of facilitating the child's involvement in sexual conduct.
- Grooming does not necessarily involve any sexual activity or even sexual conversation.

Grooming behaviours may include:

- Gaining a child's trust by making promises and giving gifts
- Lavishing a child with attention and praise so they

enjoy spending time with the perpetrator

- Inappropriately allowing a child to overstep ministry rules or legal boundaries
- Asking the child to keep the relationship to themselves
- Testing the boundaries of the child e.g. by undressing in front of them, 'accidental' intimate touching
- Engaging with the child in various forms of close physical contact so that they become comfortable with such contact e.g. roughhousing, tickling or patting
- Trying to isolate the child from their parent or guardian, creating a situation where the child wants to spend time with the perpetrator
- Spending time exclusively with the child in order to create a 'special relationship'
- Inappropriately extending a relationship with a child outside of ministry
- Inappropriate personal communication, including internet contact
- Providing cigarettes, drugs or alcohol to a child
- Making sexual comments or jokes to a child
- Showing pornography to commence sexual discussions with a child

All MGL members and co-workers must be alert to the possibility of grooming. They must make sure they are not moving in that direction themselves, and immediately report if they suspect this is happening with another member or co-worker.

Social Media Contact

While the MGL value Electronic communication as a way to connect with others, it is important to ensure safe and clear channels of communication.

MGL members and co-workers are expected to adhere to the protocols outlined in the Missionaries of God's Love Internet, Email and Social Networking Policy.

This document includes the following protocols for MGL members:

- Only official social networking sites set up by MGL can be used for contact with children. This is only for advertising, follow up from events, and regular contact. It is not for extended personal chatting.
- These accepted social networking sites must be approved by the head of the house or ministry and enable users to connect with the ministry. They must be public, open and transparent. They need to have all components public, open to all users, and able to be accessible for the purpose of monitoring. They should

be regularly monitored.

- Contact with a child through the official social media should be approved by the parent and the parent should be copied in to the communication.
- MGL members should not connect with, 'friend' or 'follow' on any social media platform even if the request comes from the child.

Images of Children

Children should only be photographed or videoed by MGL members or co-workers if:

- Permission has been gained by the ministry from parents/guardians and the child
- The context is directly related to participation in ministry activities
- The child is appropriately dressed and posed
- The image is taken in the presence of others

Care should be taken in distribution of images taken by the ministry. Some rules to observe:

- Never electronically post images of children that offer personal information, including last name, contact information, home address, phone numbers, the ministry name, email address, last name of friends or relatives, instant messaging names, age or birthdate
- It is illegal to post or transfer obscene or pornographic images of children
- Always check the visual background of a picture for identifying information and ensure geographical identification metadata is not embedded prior to posting
- Also be aware of and comply with the data breach scheme obligations under the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Images are not to be exhibited digitally (including on website or social media page) without parent/guardian knowledge and approval unless they are presented in a manner that de-identifies the child. Any caption or accompanying text must not identify a child if such identification is potentially harmful.

Dealing with Breaches and Matters of Concern

The Missionaries of God's Love aims to deal with all reports under this Code of Conduct fairly and appropriately, and to act on the following principles:

1. Promoting a positive experience of the Church and creating a strong community of faith
2. Preventing misconduct where this is possible
3. Ensuring fair process for persons against whom allegations are made; and

4. Dealing effectively with any allegations which are substantiated, including responding compassionately to anyone who has been affected

What Should You Report?

You may come across possible breaches of this Code of Conduct, or matters that cause you concern, in any number of ways. These might include:

1. A disclosure made to you by a child
2. Observing events that cause you to form an objectively reasonable belief that a child is being harmed or abused, or is at risk of being harmed or abused (whether by a family member, a member of MGL or co-worker, or by another person)
3. Being present and witnessing an event or incident

Regardless of the way in which an issue arises, you should always report circumstances that cause you concern and you should certainly always report:

1. Any material breach of this Code of Conduct
2. Any incident in which a child is seriously harmed or goes missing
3. Any emergency situation including a medical emergency
4. Any hazard or risk or harm to a child that is not being adequately addressed
5. Any allegation of sexual misconduct
6. Any disclosure by a child, or an objectively reasonable belief you have formed, that a child is being abused or is at risk of abuse of any kind
7. Any allegation of violence inflicted by an adult upon a child
8. Any allegation in which an adult has been under the influence of drugs or alcohol while being responsible for children
9. Any incident in which a child has been seriously harmed or injured physically or psychologically or is at risk of harm or injury
10. Any allegation of conduct which is or might be unlawful

(Note that situations listed above as 5), 6), 7) and 8) should be reported immediately to the police.)

If you are not sure whether to report a matter or to whom to report the matter, or need guidance on how to report a breach of this Code of Conduct, contact the MGL Safeguarding Coordinator.

The process for reporting and dealing with concerns or breaches of this Code of Conduct will vary depending on the type of conduct and who is responsible for the conduct.

Dealing with Disclosures of Abuse by Children

If a child makes a disclosure to you that sexual, physical or psychological abuse is occurring, or you form an objectively reasonable belief that a child is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed, you should immediately report the matter to the police of that jurisdiction who will advise you on the next steps to take.

Be aware that the child may be feeling ashamed, guilty and scared, and may be worried about the consequences of telling someone about the abuse. Stay calm and listen carefully to the child. Tell them you believe them and that they did the right thing by telling you. Do not make promises you cannot keep such as promising that you will not tell anyone else.

To assist the child it may be necessary to provide some psychological support and/or counselling or to ensure that such counselling is available to the child.

If this disclosure or belief is in regard to an MGL member or co-worker the Moderator should be informed as soon as possible.

To Report Matters Other than Those Which Must Be Reported to the Police

Any matter that arises within a parish under MGL care, which is not pertaining to an MGL member or co-worker, should be reported in the first instance to the parish priest, who will act in accordance with the procedures of the Diocese to which the parish belongs.

Any matter that arises within an event or ministry conducted by the Disciples of Jesus Community, which is not pertaining to an MGL member or co-worker, should be reported in the first instance to the head of the event or ministry, who will then act in accordance with the procedures of the Disciples of Jesus Community.

To report breaches of the Code of Conduct by an MGL priest, brother, seminarian or co-worker/volunteer the process outlined in the MGL Complaints Procedure must be followed.

In making a report you should write a confidential incident record which covers the details of the incident or matter of concern.