

Code of Conduct

Adapted from the International Fellowship of Chaplains (IFOC)

Introduction

As members of the Emergencies Ministry program, we are open to the various theologies, traditions and values of our faith communities and to the dignity and worth of each individual. We are dedicated to advancing the wellbeing of those who seek our help and assistance and to the maintenance of high standards of professional conduct and competence. We are accountable for our ministry whatever its environment. This accountability is expressed in relationships, to affected people, colleagues, students, our faith communities, and through the acceptance and practice of the principles and procedures of this Code of Ethics.

In order to uphold our standards, as members of the Emergencies Ministry program, we covenant to accept the following foundational premises:

- a) To maintain responsible association with the faith group in which we have standing.
- b) To avoid discriminating against individuals we minister to on the basis of race, color, gender, sex, sexual orientation, religion, or national origin.
- c) To manage our personal lives in a healthy fashion and to seek appropriate assistance for our own personal problems or conflicts.
- d) To establish and maintain appropriate professional relationship boundaries

Demonstrate Sensitivity to all Faith Traditions

While individually maintaining their own faith tradition, trained volunteers seek to be sensitive to the wide range of faith traditions which are a part of our community and the wider Australian society. Volunteers will not seek to be what they are not, but will respect the faith of the individuals they serve and facilitate connection of people with their own faith tradition.



Our volunteers are drawn from faith community groups who are members of, or eligible for membership, from the following communities, and are actively involved in ecumenical or multifaith works:

- Victorian Council of Churches
- Multifaith Advisory Group
- Jewish Christian Muslim Association of Australia
- Faith Communities Council of Victoria
- Islamic Council of Victoria
- Buddhist Council of Victoria
- Hindu Community Council of Victoria
- Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria

Follow the Incident Command Structure

Trained personnel will only be activated when Local Government or Human Services determines a need for their presence and thus will not self-activate. They are part of an overall care response. In the context of Relief and Recovery Centres, trained personnel will always work under the direction of the Team Leader and the Centre Manager, and are willing to accept the authority of those in command and demonstrate flexibility. They will also work cooperatively with other agencies and organisation and will follow all protocols specified in the training and will participate in regular retraining to ensure appropriate and relevant response.

Professional Practices

In all professional matters, members of the Victorian Council of Churches (VCC) Emergencies Ministry program will maintain a standard of conduct that protects the public and advances Personal Support in regards to Psychological First Aid (PFA) and Emotional Spiritual Care.

- a) We use our knowledge and professional relationships for the benefit of the people we serve and not to secure unfair personal advantage.
- b) We will provide training for staff and volunteers appropriate to the level of service we require from them.

- c) We clearly represent our level of skill and training. We limit our support to that level.
- d) We are prepared to render services to individuals and communities in crisis without regard to financial remuneration when necessary.
- e) We neither receive nor pay a commission for pastoral counseling referrals.
- f) We conduct our individual practice, regional and Corporate fiscal affairs with due regard to recognized business and accounting procedures.
- g) Names and records of affected persons shall be held in strictest confidence.
- h) We shall be careful to represent facts truthfully to all interested parties, referral sources, and third parties regarding credentials and pastoral services rendered. We shall correct any misrepresentation of our professional qualifications or affiliations.
- i) We do not malign colleagues or other professionals.

Relationships with Affected Persons

It is the responsibility of members of the VCC Emergencies Ministry program to maintain relationships with those we serve on a professional basis.

- a) We do not abandon or neglect the individuals we serve. If we are unable, or unwilling for appropriate reasons, to provide help or continue a professional relationship, every reasonable effort shall be made to refer the individual to an appropriate resource.
- b) We make only realistic statements regarding the personal support process and its outcome.
- c) We show sensitive regard for the moral, social, and religious standards of affected persons and communities. We avoid imposing our beliefs on others, although we may express them when appropriate in the personal support process when requested. **The VCC Emergencies Ministry does not condone the practice of proselytism or evangelizing affected people in any way. This is an abuse of power.**
- d) We do not engage in harassment, abusive words or actions, and exploitative coercion of current or former affected persons.

e) We will not discriminate a person in anyway based on;

- age
- disability, or
- race, including colour, national or ethnic origin or immigrant status
- sex, pregnancy, marital or relationship status, family responsibilities or breastfeeding
- sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status.

f) All forms of sexual behavior or harassment with those we serve are unethical, even when an affected person invites or consents to such behavior or involvement. Sexual behavior is defined as, but not limited to, all forms of overt and covert seductive speech, gestures, or behavior.

Child Safe Practices

All staff, volunteers and board members of VCC Emergencies Ministry are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behavior towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

All personnel of VCC Emergencies Ministry are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- adhering to VCC Emergencies Ministry child safe policy at all times / upholding VCC Emergencies Ministry statement of commitment to child safety at all time
taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone with respect
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)

- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to VCC Emergencies Ministry Child Safety Officer TEAM LEADER / leadership, and ensure any allegation is reported to the police or child protection
- reporting any child safety concerns to VCC Emergencies Ministry Child Safety Officer TEAM LEADER / leadership if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe
- encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

Staff and volunteers must not:

- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favoritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- exhibit behaviors with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps. Sitting on laps could be appropriate sometime, for example while reading a storybook to a small child in an open plan area)
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability
- have contact with a child or their family outside of our organisation without our child safety officer's knowledge and/or consent (for example, no babysitting).

- Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate)
- have any online contact with a child or their family (unless necessary, for example providing families with e-newsletters)
- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.
- By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to VCC Emergencies Ministry Child Safety Officer TEAM LEADER / leadership.

Confidentiality

As members of the VCC Emergencies Ministry, we respect the integrity and protect the welfare of all persons with whom we are working and have an obligation to safeguard information about them that has been obtained in the course of membership and the personal support process.

- a) All records kept on affected persons and membership are stored and/or disposed of in a manner that assures security and confidentiality and accords with the Privacy Act.
- b) We treat all communications from affected persons with professional confidence.
- c) Except in those situations where the identity of an affected person is necessary to the understanding of the case, we use only the first names of that person. It is our responsibility to convey the importance of confidentiality, this is particularly important when the supervision is shared by other professionals, as in a supervisory group.
- d) We do not disclose confidential information to anyone, except as mandated by law; to prevent a clear and immediate danger to someone; in the course of a civil, criminal or disciplinary action arising from the personal support where the personal support worker is a defendant; for purposes of supervision or consultation; or by previously obtained verbal or written permission. In cases involving more than one person, written permission must be obtained from all legally accountable persons who have been present during the support before any disclosure can be made.
- e) No photography, audio and/or video tape recording or permission for third party observation of personal support will be allowed.
- f) We do not use these standards of confidentiality to avoid intervention when it is necessary, e.g., when there is evidence of abuse of minors, the elderly, the disabled, and the physically or mentally incompetent, murder, threat of murder, or suicide, etc.
- g) All current provisions of the Privacy Act will be observed.

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