



Sisters of the Good Samaritan of the Order of St Benedict

Professional Standards Policy

INTRODUCTION

‘The name sufficiently indicates the scope, since the Religious are called to imitate the charity of the kind Samaritan who was moved to pity the poor wounded man and, having poured oil and wine into his wounds to heal him, afterwards conveyed him to a place of security’

Constitutions of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan 4:6

In the spirit of our founder, Archbishop John Bede Polding...

As Sisters of the Good Samaritan, therefore, we follow a gospel way of life at the service of the Church. We take our distinctive vision and spirit from the teaching of St Benedict and the example of the Good Samaritan, as interpreted for us by John Bede Polding. We so serve God with the gifts given us that in all things God may be glorified. *Constitutions of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan 4:9-11*

‘Do we not feel a call to become the ministers of Christ’s mercy and
Messengers of Christ’s compassion’

John Bede Polding: 1874 Pastoral Letter

PURPOSE

This Professional Standards Policy expresses our commitment to live and work in accordance with the values and principles as articulated in:

1. the Constitutions of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan of the Order of St Benedict
2. Integrity in Ministry, Towards Healing and Good Samaritan Codes of Practice
3. Other Policies of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

As Sisters of the Good Samaritan we recognize that integrity in ministry is at the heart of the call to seek God who impels us to be neighbour and our response to God's mission in the Church and world. The Congregation is committed to providing safe environments for children, young people and vulnerable adults and to restorative justice. Therefore we are committed to creating co-operative and harmonious relationships in our Good Samaritan communities, with our partners in ministry and where we are invited into mission.

We are committed to the Principles and Procedures as outlined in Integrity in Ministry, Towards Healing and the Congregation's Codes of Practice:

1. Sisters of the Good Samaritan
2. Employees, Volunteers and Contractors of Sisters of the Good Samaritan
3. Superior and Council

These documents challenge us to personal, communal and professional integrity. As well, they call us to respond to a person, who may make a complaint of abuse against us, according to values from our tradition: listening with empathy, compassion, healing, hospitality, restorative justice and upholding the dignity of all whom we serve.

The Congregation is committed to building right relationships with people whom Sisters, employees or volunteers may have harmed by conduct which has caused pain and suffering.

Sisters, partners and volunteers are to be active in bringing about justice for all. Compassion and justice are at the heart of our mission to be neighbour.

'But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him,
he was moved with compassion...
Go and do likewise' **Luke 10:33, 37**

CONTEXT

The documents: [Towards Healing, Integrity in Ministry](#) and [Good Samaritan Codes of Practice](#) underpin this policy which is intended to:

1. Assist each member of the Congregation, in whichever country she lives, in her personal responsibility to live and minister in harmony with its ideals and values.
2. Guide employees, volunteers and contractors in carrying out their roles with integrity and competence.
3. Inform and direct the role of the Congregation's Safeguarding Coordinator and Advisory Group.
4. Direct the Superior and her Council in responding to and managing complaints which may relate to:
 - members of the Congregation (living and deceased)
 - former members
 - employees and volunteers of the Congregation

IMPLEMENTATION

The Superior with her Council has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that all aspects of professional standards, particularly the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults, are effectively addressed in the following areas:

Commitment to professional standards and safeguarding practices

- The Superior and Council will arrange for every sister, employee and volunteer to become familiar with this Policy, together with the principles and standards of Integrity in Ministry and the Congregation's Codes of Practice. Sisters are expected to reflect on and commit to their application personally, in communal living, in the workplace and in ministry within and beyond the Congregation.
- Every sister in ministry is expected to comply with the relevant code of her profession as well as to strive for integrity and competence in the performance of ministry.
- A Sister who works in one of our Congregational ministries is obliged by the principles

as outlined in Integrity in Ministry and the Code of Practice of the ministry in which they work.

- Any sister who ministers in an individual ministry is responsible for having regular supervision, taking opportunities for professional development and ensuring that her way of working, and the structural arrangements of her workplace, conforms with the standards of Integrity in Ministry and our Code of Practice.

- Where a sister is authorized to minister alone, the Superior and Council will ensure that:
 1. She has a current Working with Children Check and Police Check
 2. She is adequately resourced by the Congregation, particularly in relation to provision of a proper workplace and for supervision and professional development
 3. She has an appropriate professional indemnity cover
 4. A sister, who resides for a period, in a country other than where Good Samaritan communities are located, is obliged by this Policy, as well as relevant policies of the diocese in which she lives and ministers.

Response to Complaints

In the context of the processes as outlined in Towards Healing the Superior or her delegate will at all times respond to a person, who speaks of pain and suffering as a result of abuse, with sensitivity and compassion. Any complaint is directed to the correct church authority at the time of the report. Where appropriate, a person making a complaint will be invited to engage with the process of Towards Healing if the case is in Australia or within the Congregation's Codes of Practice or within the legislation of another country.

- Every complaint will be referred in the first instance to the Superior or her delegate who may be a member of Council or the Safeguarding Coordinator.

- Ordinarily, to enable a person's complaint to be addressed effectively and in good time, the Superior may appoint a Member of Council to liaise with herself, the

person making the complaint, the person against whom the complaint is made and the relevant Office for Professional Standards.

- If any sister in the Congregation receives a complaint from a caller on the telephone, from someone she meets socially or in the course of her ministry, she will listen with empathy and refer the person to a Member of Council who will then advise the Superior.
- If a complaint is made against the Superior the first Counsellor will, as directed in Towards Healing 35.3.2, refer the complaint to the National Committee for Professional Standards.
- Every sister and anyone associated with the Congregation who is involved in receiving or addressing a complaint is obliged by the demands of confidentiality.
- Employees and volunteers of the Congregation are instructed about how to respond if they receive a complaint or otherwise become aware of a violation of the Code of Practice for Employees, Volunteers and Contractors of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan on the part of a sister, employee, volunteer or contractor of the Congregation.
- If the Towards Healing process is not an appropriate option for the person making the complaint, the Superior, in consultation with her/him, the Safeguarding Co coordinator and other relevant parties, will offer an alternative process based on principles of restorative justice e.g. mediation.
- The Superior will ensure that a sister, employee, volunteer or contractor who is the subject of a complaint is given ongoing pastoral, psychological, spiritual and legal support throughout the process.
- When other Church authorities are involved in a complaint, the Superior will work collaboratively with them in seeking a resolution.

- The Superior will, in consultation with her Council and the Finance Council, ensure adequate funds are available for all contingencies associated with addressing complaints and future redress.

Pastoral Support

When an issue of complaint has been resolved, sisters are encouraged to continue a pastoral relationship with the person who has made a complaint if the Superior, in consultation with all concerned, considers this to be appropriate. A sister/s offering a pastoral relationship should be those who were not involved in the processes of resolution.

Confidential Records

- All files relating to issues of complaint, active and closed, will hold only that information, which is prudent or legally necessary to retain. In determining the content of each file and the period for which it should be held, the Superior will seek advice from the Congregation's lawyers, the Safeguarding Advisory Group and the Catholic Professional Standards Office.
- All active files concerned with sisters, employees or volunteers, are held by the Superior.
- The Superior is responsible for closed files, which when appropriate, are sent to the Congregational secure Archives. Files must be securely protected and access must be on a limited and specified basis at the discretion of the Superior.

Professional Compliance: Employees, Volunteers and Contractors

The Superior will ensure that:

- Every work, incorporated or unincorporated, which is owned or sponsored by the Congregation has a Code of Practice which aligns with the relevant Church documents, Congregational Code of Practice and civil requirements.
- All employees, volunteers and contractors have current Working with Children and Police Clearances.

- The Board of Congregational Incorporated Ministries will ensure that the Superior receives a copy of their Code of Practice i.e. the SGS Code of Practice for Employees, Volunteers and Contractors which includes their Vision Statement.
- The Director/Manager of each ministry will provide regular opportunities for staff and volunteers to familiarize themselves with these Codes of Practice and to understand how they relate to them personally in the performance of their work and to the obligations and integrity of the Congregation.

COMMUNICATION

The Superior will ensure that:

- Guidelines for relating to the media on behalf of the Congregation are developed and updated.
- Protocols are developed so that the sisters, employees and volunteers receive accurate and timely information, should an issue of complaint become public.

If an issue of complaint is likely to become public, the Superior will consult her Council, the Safeguarding Co coordinator and Catholic Professional Standards Office (formerly NCPS) Media Officer in determining the nature of any public response from the Congregation and by whom it should be made.

CONCLUSION

As Sisters of the Good Samaritan, 'Whether our ministry be solely within the community, or in the fields of education, visitation of the poor and sick in parishes and hospitals, care of people with disabilities or of those at risk in our society, or in any other field, we endeavor to proclaim the glory of God above all things and to minister to others according to the spirit and tradition of the congregation'. *Statutes of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan 2:3*

Integrity in Ministry A Document of Principles and Standards for Catholic Clergy and Religious in Australia, National Committee for Professional Standards, 2004 (reprinted 2010.)

Towards Healing Principles and Procedures in Responding to Complaints of Abuse Against Personnel of the Catholic Church in Australia, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia, 2010 and associated documents .

Integrity in the Service of the Church A Resource Document of Principles and Standards for Lay Workers in the Catholic Church in Australia September 2011

Good Samaritan Codes of Practice reviewed March 2016: Sisters of the Good Samaritan; Council of the Superior; Employees, Volunteers and Contractors of the Sisters of Good Samaritan in Offices, Centre's and Congregational Ministries.