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CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

A guide for interacting with children and the vulnerable

This code of conduct is intended to promote the safety and well-being of children within our community by providing clear guidelines for adults working with or around children. It outlines the standards by which anyone within the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions should relate, interact and behave with children.



While few people set out to intentionally harm children; lack of information, carelessness or other interests can unintentionally compromise our children's safety and wellbeing. Therefore, prevention is the best strategy for child protection. By outlining what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour of adults working with children, this Code of Conduct serves to protect children and young people, reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur and signals that child safety is a priority within our community. It also makes up a key part of our broader Child Safety Framework.

It also provides a reference point for discussion when there may be confusion, uncertainty or grey areas concerning appropriate behaviour with children. Anyone working with or around children on a regular basis within the Diocese is required to read, understand and sign that they will adhere to these standards.

Please make sure you carefully read and understand this document before you sign it. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Diocese Child Safety Committee (CSC). You are also encouraged to seek additional guidance on these matters should you need it from the CSC. (Contact details are provided below)

This code of conduct applies not only to interactions with children on church premises, activities or excursions but in any context or aspect.

An allegation regarding a breach of the Code of Conduct should be reported to the Diocese Child Safety Committee which will then investigate founded allegations. Any allegation that falls within a Reportable Conduct Scheme within any of the parishes or organisations under the Diocese will also be reported to the relevant scheme. (For more information on the Reportable Conduct Scheme refer to <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme/>) Any allegation that is criminal in nature will be reported to police and relevant authorities. The subject of an investigation will be suspended from their paid or volunteer position until the matter is fully investigated. Anyone found to be in violation of the Code of Conduct will be reviewed and potentially removed from their paid or volunteer position within the Church.

The Diocese Management Committee of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions (which was established by Papal Decree signed by His Holiness Pope Tawadros II on 8 November 2018 to manage the affairs of the Diocese) is responsible for endorsing the Code of Conduct. The Senior Priest of each parish is responsible for ensuring all employees and volunteers have signed the Codes of Conduct and for implementing the standards of conduct as set out within this code. The Senior Priest of each parish is also responsible for appointing a parish Child Safety Officer/Team to assist with compliance.

This code of conduct applies to all adult members of and visitors to the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne. However, those who must read, agree and sign the code of conduct are:

- Priests and other members of the clergy
- Deacons in all their ranks
- Church Board members and others in various lay leadership positions within the Diocese
- Sunday school teachers and drivers
- Regular church volunteers
- Scout, choir, sporting and activity leaders
- Paid employees, contractors and anyone working on behalf of the Diocese



CODE OF CONDUCT:

As a member of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliate Regions who regularly interacts with, volunteers with or teaches children, I am responsible for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Therefore:

I WILL NOT:

- Subject a child to any form of child abuse including sexual offence, physical punishment or attack; Nor any social or physical harm, isolation, immobilisation or coercion
- Subject a child to any sexual suggestion or misconduct. I will not direct a child to act in any sexual manner nor form a relationship with any child that is of an inappropriate and illegal nature
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves such as undressing or toileting
- Condone, conceal or participate in behaviour of children/ young adults that are illegal, unsafe or abusive
- Develop a 'special' relationship with a child that can be construed as grooming
- Possess, use or operate any dangerous materials or equipment within the vicinity of children or allow children to do so
- Reject or exclude a child
- Create opportunities to be alone with a child
- Physically restrain a child unless they are endangering themselves, others or damaging property
- Discuss with or show materials of a sexual nature to children or in the vicinity of children unless it is part of an approved Sunday school teaching curriculum and/or as it relates to teaching or mentoring children on their own safety and appropriate interactions
- Discriminate against any child or exhibit favouritism towards any child, including offering special treatment or gifts to particular child/children.
- Shame, humiliate, bully, distress or frighten a child
- Spend periods of time alone with a child in places where others cannot witness our interactions – either in the physical world or online. Any Sunday School visitations, counselling or teaching should be done in the presence of another adult. Confessions between a priest or child should be in an area where others can witness
- Instruct children to keep confidences or secrets
- Smack, hit or physically assault a child or young adult, nor threaten violence. I will not use any form of corporal discipline
- Discuss or expose children to accounts or images of violence, unless it is part of an approved Sunday school curriculum & in an appropriate context, (i.e. discussion of martyrs, Bible stories)
- Be neglectful or fail to adequately supervise children in my care
- Use inappropriate or offensive language. Direct degrading or insulting comments to a child
- Possess, use or be under the influence of any tobacco, alcohol or illicit drugs when I am with children or make them available to children
- I will not post or disclose identifying information about a child, such as addresses, email, telephone number, residence, school, or other identifying details relating to their outside activities
- Disclose information about a child unless required by law or policy



I WILL:

- Be a positive role model and conduct myself in a manner that is consistent with the values and teachings of the Coptic Orthodox Church
- Respect and treat all children equally regardless of race, sex, religion, orientation, national, ethnic or social origin, or ability
- Have zero tolerance for the abuse, harm, misconduct towards or discrimination of children. Report any concerns, violations of this code of conduct or instances of abuse to the Diocese Child Safety Committee (CSC) and comply with the Diocese' *Procedure for Reporting & Responding to Suspected Abuse & Child Safety*
- Redirect unwanted behaviour of children using appropriate strategies, not through punishment, coercion, yelling or bullying
- Maintain a safe environment and prevent children from engaging in dangerous play or activities. Restrain children from hurting themselves and/or remove them from harm
- Ensure that children are behaving respectfully and appropriately towards each other. I will report any instances of sexual misconduct by a child towards another child.
- Be transparent in my actions and whereabouts
- Adhere to the Diocese's Child Safety Framework and uphold the Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
 - Set clear boundaries in order to facilitate appropriate behaviour between adults and children and among children
 - Encourage children to express their opinions and needs. I will listen actively to children and offering support, positive guidance and encouragement
 - Help children develop self-reliance and self-esteem and enable children to participate in decisions that affect them
 - Facilitate open communication between children, parents, clergy, staff and volunteers
 - Be mindful of the cultural values, age, physical and intellectual development, and abilities of each child. Be particularly mindful of the needs of children with disabilities or other vulnerabilities
 - Take confessions, discussions or counselling sessions with a child in a public or open area whenever possible and limit my time alone with a child in areas where others cannot witness our interactions
 - Maintain awareness of each child and the adults that are with them at all times during church activities. Maintain awareness of strangers around children
- Adhere to the Diocese's Photography, Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy
 - Promote the safety and wellbeing of children, be vigilant and proactive regarding matter of child safety
 - Communicate and interact with children in an age appropriate manner
 - Encourage children to behave respectfully to one another and treat others the way they would want to be treated
 - Safeguard an environment that is free from discrimination, bullying and harassment. Intervene if I witness other children or adults fighting, physically or emotionally harming another child and report it accordingly
 - Respect the boundaries of children and young people and not engage in physical contact or other interactions if they do not want it
 - Respect the confidential nature of information I may know about a child and not use that information to harm a child
 - Seek advice, support and assistance when I need it. Seek guidance from the Diocese Child Safety Committee on child safety and child protection matters



I ACKNOWLEDGE:

I am responsible for my own actions and will utilise Child Safe standards and best practices to avoid actions and behaviours that could be in breach of this Code of Conduct and the Child Safe policies of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions.

I have read and understood the Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct and I am aware that the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions expects me to uphold at all times the standards of behaviour described in the Code of Conduct and in manner that is consistent with our Christian values.

If I am a member of the clergy and/or in a position of authority in a church, I will ensure that all for whom I am responsible are aware, understand and follow this code.

I understand that my reputation or the reputation of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions will not shield me from consequence should I violate this Code of Conduct.

I will also report without delay any alleged violations of this code of conduct that I witness or hear about to the Diocese Child Safety Committee and report any allegations of child abuse to the legal authorities.

I also understand that disciplinary measures and/or legal steps could be taken if I am found to be in violation of the Code of Conduct. I understand that if there is an alleged breach of this Code of Conduct, the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions may (depending on the nature of the allegation) have to inform legal authorities to meet its obligations under Australian law.¹

If an allegation of child abuse is made, I will ensure to the best of my ability that the child(ren) are safe and removed from harm.

I will also call the police on 000 if I have immediate concerns for a child's safety

I will respect the privacy of children and their families and only disclose information when required by policy or law.

Name	_____	Witness' Name	_____
Signature	_____	Witness' Signature	_____
Date	_____	Date	_____

CONTACT DETAILS

COPTIC ORTHODOX DIOCESE CHILD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Contact person: Father Daniel Ghabrial

Contact email: vicargeneral@melbcopts.org.au

¹ Please refer to the Coptic Orthodox Diocese for Melbourne and Affiliated Region's *Procedure for Reporting and Responding to Suspected Abuse and Child Safety Concerns*.