



# The Department of Catechesis

Syro-Malabar Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle Melbourne, Australia

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## Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct offers a guide for expected behaviour in everyday practice by anyone involved in ministry with children, with safeguarding responsibilities to children, young people and vulnerable adults who are in the care of or in contact with the Eparchy and its parishes/Mission. The Eparchy demonstrated its commitment by providing its parishes/Missions/other functional departments a Policy Statement and Practice Guidelines for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults. The Professional Code ensures the appropriate use of the above policy statements and allows for a cultural change in the church setting through its members adapting professional and ethical behaviours. The Eparchy leaders, staff, volunteers, contractors and all involved in ministry with children, young people and vulnerable adults are required to abide by this code.

### Purpose of the code

The aim of the Code of Conduct is to ensure that anyone involved in parishes/Missions/ other functional departments apply appropriate behaviours whilst in the presence of children, young people, and vulnerable adults. In addition, it offers a warning for all involved in ministry with children in parishes/ Missions about unacceptable behaviours and consequences for breaches.

Furthermore, it indicates the parameters for the Apex Board and parishes/Missions in implementing and monitoring the Code.

### 1. ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

The below listed behaviours are applicable to The Eparchy Leaders, Clergy, catechist, youth leader, kaikaran, parish council, choir, mathruvedi, pithruvedi, sacramental coordinator, youth ministry leaders, altar servers, choir leaders, retreat organisers, pastoral council, communion to the sick members, mission members, family apostolate animators, staff, visitors, volunteers and all members who associates with children, young people and vulnerable adults in the church community.

Whilst adhering to the Eparchy's Policy Statement and Practice Guidelines for safeguarding children, young people, and vulnerable adults, all members are expected to follow the below code.

- 1.1 Make all efforts to prevent child abuse and protect children, young people, and vulnerable adults.
- 1.2 Act in the best interest of children, young people, and vulnerable adults always and especially when they are presented as a victim.
- 1.3 Respect all members of the church community equally.



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- 1.4 Report or appropriately escalate allegations or disclosures of physical abuse, child sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.
- 1.5 Make appropriate decisions that are in the best interest of the child.
- 1.6 Keep all information regarding child protection concerns confidential, only discussing information with relevant and appropriate people according to the reporting procedures
- 1.7 Work in partnership with Government departments to address any significant risk of harm presented.
- 1.8 Protect welfare of all children while promoting a culture of safeguarding in church community and listen to children and young people and treat them as individuals.
- 1.9 Respect the special needs of children with disability.
- 1.10 Identify situations that may cause harm to a child or young person and be proactive in preventing further harm.
- 1.11 Empower children and encourage their participation in decision making.
- 1.12 Be aware of boundaries when dealing with children.
- 1.13 Keep children and young people away from substances and ensure that I am not under the influence of alcohol or drugs while providing care or support.
- 1.14 Always ensure appropriate written approvals are sought before transporting children in a third party's vehicle. A signed consent should be sought for transporting children to events or for activities outside of routine.
- 1.15 Be aware of "stranger danger" and provide age appropriate safety planning for children and young people.
- 1.16 Maintain an ethical and professional everyday conduct.
- 1.17 Ensure two adults accompany children and young people when interacting with them in parishes and Missions.
- 1.18 Always have allocated volunteers for providing adult supervision for safeguarding children in social gathering, fete, church events, and parish sponsored programs.
- 1.19 Maintain appropriate professional boundaries in all settings including virtual settings such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and other social media.
- 1.20 Ensure behaviour management of children should be a positive and fun experience. Ensure it is not an aggressive, ridiculing, or naming and shaming experience for the child.
- 1.21 Obtain knowledge of age appropriate behaviour patterns and refrain from being critical of young people.
- 1.22 Ensure medicine is not administered on child without written parental consent. Should medicine be required in an emergency where parental consent has not been received, child health and wellbeing will be prioritised. Such cases will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Eparchy.



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- 1.23 Ensure children are photographed with written parental consent only. All photos should be taken in public setting if parents have consented.
- 1.24 Ensure parish seeks consent and signed approval from parents if it wishes to publish child photos in parishes, internet site or social media.
- 1.25 Demonstrate care and compassion to vulnerable adults e.g. persons affected by recent separation and divorce, family breakdown, pregnant women, recent bereavement, mental health issues, family violence, and an addiction to substances.

## 2. BREACHING CODE OF CONDUCT

Breaches include failure to adhere to any of the above. Other breaches are

- 2.1 Fail to maintain full confidentiality regarding any matter related to children, young people, and vulnerable adults.
- 2.2 Ignore risk of harm and failing to report child abuse.
- 2.3 Work against the Eparchy's policies, guidelines and the code of conduct.
- 2.4 Try to cover up issues and not following practice guidelines.
- 2.5 Engage in any kind of physical punishment (smacking, hitting, grabbing, shaking, etc). This type of punishment may be treated as criminal assault.
- 2.6 Be punishing, isolating, emotionally abusing or hurting the feelings of a child.
- 2.7 Treat a child "special" and spend excessive time with a child or young person in isolation.
- 2.8 Engage in inappropriate conversations or belittle a child.
- 2.9 Target a child or young person using inappropriate language.
- 2.10 Work with children and young people under the influence of substances.
- 2.11 Touch a child unless it is warranted for the safeguarding of the child.
- 2.12 Try to investigate child abuse matters and following inquisitive questioning of the victim. The investigation of child abuse is the role of the Government agencies who deals with child abuse matters in your State or Territory.
- 2.13 Confront offenders.

## 3. CONSEQUENCES OF BREACHES

Anyone who breaches this Code of Conduct will face disciplinary action. All breaches will be documented and investigated. Furthermore, persons involved in breaches will be removed from the role in support of the investigation.

Mandatory reporting or police involvement will be requested as necessary.

Please visit <http://syromalabar.org.au/safeguarding-children/> for relevant policies.