

This Child Protection Policy applies internationally to all of our brothers wherever they are living or serving, and it is written with this international application in view.

Note: The Servants of the Word are in the process of training brothers in our policy and assigning child protection officers in our various regions, and are working towards the establishment of review boards in each region.



1.0 Introduction

The Servants of the Word are committed to safeguarding all children and young people regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs. We will take care that our relationships with all are characterized by respect, modesty, restraint, and concern for their welfare, including physical, emotional, social, and spiritual wellbeing.

2.0 Definitions:

- 2.1 The terms 'child', 'children', 'young people' or 'minor' mean any person under the age of 18, and they are used more or less interchangeably.
- 2.2 The term 'parent' means a child's birth or adoptive parent, legal guardian, or legal care giver.
- 2.3 A 'brother' or 'member' of the Servants of the Word (SW) means any committed brother or an affiliate to the SW whose service assignments are decided upon and made by the SW.

3.0 Relating to children

All members of the SW have some degree of interaction with children in the various contexts in which they serve, work, and live including, but not limited to:

- 3.1 Youth work – activities related to our service and mission as a religious order.
- 3.2 Personal relationships with individuals and families both within and outside of the community life of the Sword of the Spirit (SOS), including their personal friends and acquaintances.
- 3.3 Their own individual families.

4.0 Code of Conduct for SW Brothers

- 4.1 When interacting with minors, brothers will follow the SW Code of Conduct as stated in this section (4.0 to 4.18).
- 4.2 Brothers will receive training in the SW Child Protection Policy and review it annually.
- 4.3 Brothers will take care that their relationships with children are characterized by respect, modesty, and concern for children's welfare. While especially concerned for children's spiritual welfare, brothers who work or interact with children will be concerned for all aspects of their lives, remaining mindful of the special responsibility they have to protect children from any kind of harm.
- 4.4 Brothers will strive to have a balanced approach of being accessible to children while maintaining the proper dignity, respect, and distance that should characterize child/adult relationships. The initiatives that children take and responses that children make to brothers (e.g., a child's level of familiarity or affection), should not determine how they relate to children in return.
- 4.5 Brothers will primarily seek to spend time with children in family contexts or service settings, and primarily in a group and/or with other adults present. Though one-to-one relating is not excluded, such interactions will be done with appropriate safeguards (see 4.9 to 4.13 below).
- 4.6 Brothers will not physically punish or restrain children. If a child's immediate safety is at risk, brothers may take necessary action, such as briefly holding the child, to ensure the child's safety (e.g., to prevent the child from running in front of a car, breaking up a fight between two children, preventing a child from assaulting another, etc.) The SW Child Protection Officer and the parents of the child will be informed of such actions.
- 4.7 Brothers will protect the modesty and dignity of children in all interactions no matter in what form or in what setting, be it person-to-person, verbal, or written. As previously stated, the level of affection children show to brothers should not determine how brothers show affection to children in return.

- 4.7.1 Physical contact with minors should occur only in public, never in private. It should occur only when physical contact is appropriate. And it should occur only when non-sexual, that is, when an outside person exercising reasonable judgment would perceive it as nonsexual.
- 4.7.2 The following are some examples of expressions of affection that are considered appropriate:
- Brief hugs, including kneeling or bending down for brief hugs with small children
 - Hand-shakes, high fives and fist bumps
 - Verbal praise
 - Briefly holding hands during prayer in a group setting
- 4.7.3 The following are some examples of expressions of affection that are considered inappropriate:
- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
 - Massage given by a brother to a child or by a child to a brother
 - Compliments that relate to physique or body development
 - Any form of unwanted affection or touching
- 4.7.4 A brother will tell his fraternal group, his elder, and the child's parents about any physical contact that has occurred that might be questionable or could be construed as questionable.
- 4.8 Brothers will be careful not to relate to children in a way that is or may be interpreted as sexual, sexually suggestive, or abusive. See definitions in section 8.
- 4.8.1 If a child relates in a way that is overly familiar or more affectionate than is appropriate, the brother will take care to redirect the child's actions and not relate in a similar manner in return.
- 4.9 Brothers will avoid situations where they are alone in private with a child, e.g., being alone in a home, in a room with the door closed, out of sight of other adults, in a motor vehicle, etc.

- 4.9.1 One-to-one meetings or activities provide a valuable opportunity for a child to develop healthy relationships and grow in maturity. However, such one-to-one contact between a brother and a child should always take place in a way which is appropriate, public, and with the consent of the child's parents.
 - 4.9.2 'Public' means visible to other people (this may include a room with closed door, but with a large window or glass door through which the people inside are easily seen) or in an area other adults are likely to frequent.
 - 4.9.3 When transporting children, brothers will avoid traveling with only one child in the vehicle. Should safety or other considerations make traveling alone with a child unavoidable, the brother will report this immediately to the child's parents and his fraternal group.
 - 4.9.4 Brothers will never sleep in the same room with children by themselves. If required for health or safety reasons, brothers will only sleep in the same immediate space with a child with another adult present.
 - 4.9.5 When staying overnight with a family other than their own, brothers will never be in private with a child while in that family's home.
- 4.10 When a brother has found himself in a private situation with a child, he will report it promptly to the parents of the child and to his fraternal group (or elder).
- 4.11 Brothers will safeguard the physical modesty and dignity of children, taking care not to be alone in rest rooms/toilets or shower/changing facilities with children.
- 4.11.1 If for reasons of safety there is a need to supervise children in such situations, such supervision will take place with another adult present.
 - 4.11.2 Whenever possible, changing and showering facilities or other privacy-related arrangements for adults should be separate from facilities or arrangements for children.
- 4.12 Brothers will dress modestly as is fitting for men who seek to be examples to young people.

4.13 Brothers will use phones, social media, letters, and any other form of personal communication with minors in a way which is consistent with the SW Code of Conduct.

4.13.1 Such forms of communication constitute a 'private setting' and thus require careful use.

4.13.2 When brothers use such means of communication, they will do so:

- With parental knowledge (with approval).
- Primarily for passing on information and for making practical arrangements.
- With limited frequency.
- Not as a primary means of building relationships or for casual or informal relating with children.
- Not late at night.

4.13.3 Brothers will not post photos or videos of an individual child without the expressed permission of the child's parents.

4.13.4 Brothers will not exchange photos or videos with an individual child without the expressed permission of the child's parents.

4.13.5 The frequency and content of communication with a minor, no matter what means are used, should always be appropriate to the role and nature of the relationship.

4.14 In relating to minors brothers will not use sexually suggestive language or innuendo, tell racy jokes, make sexually oriented remarks about dress or body, or discuss sexual experience or habits.

4.14.1 When conversations or questions about sex and or one's body are initiated by a minor, brothers may choose to answer the question at hand in an age appropriate way or refer the child to their parents. If a brother chooses to answer the question he should inform others of the conversation as befits the circumstance (e.g., parents, service supervisor, and/or fraternal group or elder) while protecting the confidentiality of the minor as appropriate.

4.15 In relating to minors brothers will not:

- show or watch movies which contain sex scenes or pornographic images;
- play video games which contain sexual violence or sexually explicit images;
- listen to music with sexually explicit lyrics.

4.16 Within our own families, there is a greater scope for the expression of relationships with our younger brothers and sisters, and with nieces and nephews. Brothers can have a strong impact in these relationships. For that very reason, they should take care when relating to children within their own families, and be in good communication with the parents.

4.17 With the exception of relatives or godchildren, brothers will take care to not form exclusive or 'special' relationships, or establish 'favorites' with individual children. Special gifts should not be given to a child without the clear approval of the parents. Secret gifts and relationships are never permitted with a child.

4.17.1 Relationships with close relatives, e.g., younger siblings, nieces, nephews, as well as godchildren, should still primarily be conducted within the context of the family and in the overall spirit of this policy.

4.18 In the event of an emergency, such as the need to aid a young person who is in danger or who has immediate medical care needs, it may be necessary to temporarily override one or more of these guidelines and principles.

5.0 Child Protection Officer

5.1 There will be a designated SW 'child protection officer' (CPO) in each SW region.

5.2 Any and all members of the SW, including elders, will inform the CPO of any child protection issues or concerns which they are aware of or which have been raised regarding the SW (for example, concerns raised in relation to children participating in a SW sponsored event and/or concerns involving a SW member, no matter what the context may be).

- 5.3 The CPO for a SW region will normally be chosen from among the brothers serving as a steward in that region. He will act on behalf of the SW as the one responsible for making sure all required steps are carried out when dealing with child protection issues. There will also be a deputy CPO who will act on the CPO's behalf if the CPO is unable or unavailable to carry out his duties. These positions will be appointed by the SW Regional Elder, and endorsed by the corporate board of that region, the Presiding Elder, and the Senior Steward. SW members and the appropriate representatives of organizations to which brothers are assigned will be informed who the CPO is in their region.
- 5.4 The role of the CPO will include the following functions:
- 5.4.1 Ensuring that this Policy is implemented and annually reviewed by all members of the SW in his region.
 - 5.4.2 Seeing that training in the implementation of this policy is provided to the members.
 - 5.4.3 Ensuring that any concern or allegation of abuse concerning SW activities or brothers is responded to appropriately and that necessary actions are taken.
 - 5.4.4 Ensuring that communication with the appropriate parties occurs if allegations are made regarding a member of the SW (see 6.4 below).
 - 5.4.5 Acting as an advocate for any young person or adult who may have child-protection concerns regarding themselves or others in relationship to the SW or a SW member(s).
 - 5.4.6 Ensuring that criminal/disclosure background checks are carried out for any brother when relevant and allowed (or required) by law, particularly for those working with minors.
 - 5.4.7 Confirming that organizations to which SW members are to be assigned have adequate child protection safeguards and policies compatible with the terms of the SW child protection policy. If this is not the case, to review with SW leadership the wisdom and advisability of such an assignment.
 - 5.4.8 Communicating annually to organizations to which a SW member is assigned that the SW CPO must immediately be informed should any child safeguarding issues or concern arise regarding that member.
 - 5.4.9 As part of the process of making a decision to move a brother from one region to another, communicating any and all child

protection issues as it relates to the brother being moved, to the CPO and the Regional Elder of the region to which the brother is moving.

- 5.5 The CPO will be responsible for securely storing any written information related to child protection policies, allegations, issues or concerns raised, actions taken, and related communications. Such records will be retained indefinitely, subject to applicable legal requirements.
- 5.6 If and when required, the CPO may delegate some of the tasks and/or enlist the help of another person or persons to ensure the completion of his responsibilities, while retaining clear oversight of the whole process.

6.0 Dealing with concerns or allegations of abuse

- 6.1 Any concern or allegation in relation to the welfare of a child, whether reported by an adult or young person, will be taken seriously by the Servants of the Word and responded to appropriately.
- 6.2 The Servants of the Word will cooperate, as requested, with any investigation carried out by civil/statutory authorities and/or law enforcement, taking care not to impede any such investigation.
- 6.3 Any SW brother, employee, or appointee of the SW who becomes aware of child protection issue or concern shall immediately inform the CPO.
 - 6.3.1 Any person, including a member, may bring a SW related concern regarding minors to the CPO.
 - 6.3.2 A member who has a concern, or has been informed about the possible abuse of a child in a SW event or context, or is aware of a breach of this policy by a SW member or in a SW context, shall inform the SW CPO within 24 hours of discovery.
 - 6.3.3 Under no circumstances should a brother who has become aware of a concern carry out his own investigation.
 - 6.3.4 Investigation and discussion of such concerns should be limited to appropriate parties (for example, the CPO, legal authorities, etc.).
- 6.4 The CPO may seek advice from appropriate statutory, civil, legal, or other agencies.

6.5 The CPO will:

- 6.5.1 Immediately contact appropriate statutory/civil authorities if a child is in immediate danger.
- 6.5.2 Communicate to statutory/civil authorities concerns or allegations as required or appropriate under the laws of the locale in which the allegation is made.
- 6.5.3 Inform the child's parents of concerns or allegations.
 - The default response of the SW is to inform parents of issues regarding their children.
 - If contacting parents may put a child at additional or greater risk, that is, when it is possible that parents are harming their own children, decisions on parental communication will be left to the judgment of civil/statutory authorities and/or law enforcement.
- 6.5.4 Inform his Regional Elder and legal/compliance officer of any concerns or allegations which have been brought to his attention. And, as appropriate, may also inform the Presiding Elder, Regional Steward, and/or Senior Steward of such information.
- 6.5.5 Inform the Chairman of the Review Board and Regional Outside Coordinator of the SOS.
- 6.5.6 As appropriate, ensure that other relevant parties are informed of the concerns or allegations, doing so with due consideration of principles of confidentiality.
 - Senior Coordinator of the local SOS Community.
 - Insurance company of the Servants of the Word.
 - Legal counsel of the Servants of the Word.

6.6 The CPO will keep a written factual record of concerns raised and/or allegations made, of communications with various persons and organizations, as well as the specific steps taken throughout the whole response process.

6.7 All communication will be done in such a way so as to not compromise any statutory/civil investigation.

6.8 The Regional Elder:

- 6.8.1 Will inform the brother who is the subject of such concerns or allegations and if known, inform him of the specifics thereof.
- 6.8.2 May, immediately or anytime thereafter, put the brother on

administrative leave. 'Administrative leave', in such circumstances, may include removing a brother from his responsibilities, reassigning his living situation, and/or limiting his movements and interaction with certain parties as is appropriate or helpful. Such actions may only be taken if doing so does not impede an investigation of concerns or allegations which have been made. Normally these actions will be taken in consultation with the Presiding Elder of the SW if he can be reached.

6.8.3 May take other actions as are deemed appropriate or necessary.

7.0 Review Board

7.1 Each SW region will have a review board which will function as a confidential consultative body to the Regional Elder and Presiding Elder.

7.2 The purposes of the Review Board are:

7.2.1 To advise the SW on proper pastoral and disciplinary actions when allegations have been made and substantiated against a SW member.

7.2.2 To advise the SW on proper pastoral and disciplinary actions to be taken when unsubstantiated allegations have been made against a SW.

- This role is particularly important in situations where statutory/civil authorities are not involved, decide not to be involved, or are involved but do not rule in any definitive way, e.g., do not file charges.

7.2.3 To review and advise the SW on its child protection policy.

7.3 The Review Board will be comprised of at least four members, all of whom are of high integrity and good judgment. At least one member will be a coordinator from the SOS, at least one member will have expertise in the management of the abuse of minors, and at least one member will be a woman. Members of the SOS will not be a majority of the board. None of the board members will be members of the SW.

7.4 The members of the Review Board will be appointed by the Regional Elder and endorsed by the corporate board of that region, the Presiding Elder, the Senior Steward, and the SOS Outside Coordinator for the region.

7.5 Review Board members will serve three year terms.

7.6 Review Board members will meet at least once per year with the Regional Elder and regional CPO. Meetings may be by conference call.

7.6.1 When there are no specific events or issues which require the action of the Board at the time the meeting is held, the meeting will be used by the SW as an updating and reporting vehicle to a body external to the SW.

8.0 Definitions of abuse

These provisions, with appropriate modification, are also applicable to vulnerable adults.

Maltreatment of a child may be caused by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger (including via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children. The following definitions are based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The four categories of abuse are:

8.1 Physical

The deliberate physical injury to a child, or the willful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, fabricating the symptoms of, or deliberately inducing, illness in a child, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behavior.

8.2 Sexual

Forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

8.3 Emotional

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It

may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

8.4 Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or care giver failing to:

- 8.4.1 Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- 8.4.2 Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- 8.4.3 Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers); or
- 8.4.4 Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.