



JOINT CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY PAPER BETWEEN THE VICARIATE FOR MIGRANTS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS (VMAS) AND THE SAINT JAMES VICARIATE (SJV)

Statement

The purposes of the Joint Child Safeguarding policies and procedures by the Saint James Vicariate and the Vicariate for Migrants and Asylum Seekers are:

- To protect children, young people and vulnerable adults who are in our care and safeguard their person and rights.
- To provide staff, volunteers and visitors with the overarching principles which guide the approach of the Vicariates in safeguarding all children in the Vicariates' care.

We believe that an infant, child, young person or vulnerable adult should never experience abuse of any kind. The Vicariates, their directors, staff, and volunteers have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all infants, children, young people and vulnerable adults to keep them safe. The Vicariates, their directors and staff are committed to always act in a way that protects them.

Scope

The policies and procedures detailed here are to be applied to all clergy, religious, laity, full-time and part-time staff, and to all interns and volunteers active within the Saint James Vicariate and VMAS (hereinafter: staff) as well as to all members of partnering organizations working with the Saint James Vicariate or VMAS on its projects and all visitors to the facilities.

Identifying risks

Abuse of babies, children and young people can occur in a variety of forms, be it physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or bullying. To identify the risks, it is important to be clear about defining and identifying behavior that is aberrant and unacceptable.

- Physical abuse: "Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns, or fractures" (Child Wise, 2008).

- Emotional abuse: "Emotional abuse is a persistent attack on a child or young person's self-esteem. It can take the form of name calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating the child or young person." (Child Wise, 2008). It may also feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

- Neglect: "Neglect is the failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter and supervision to the extent that the child's health and development are at risk" (Child Wise, 2008).

- Sexual abuse: "Sexual abuse is the actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child. Sexual abuse includes rape, incest and all forms of sexual activity involving children, including exposing children to, or taking, pornographic photographs" or other media/materials (Child Wise, 2008).

"Fundamentally, sexual harassment and abuse is a serious misuse of power and authority, committed by the dominant partner in an unequal relationship. Power is a fact of life. It is present in every relationship and situation. Clergy and others with leadership roles have been granted power as a resource and responsibility to support, lead and serve other people. The institution of the Church, and individual members, have a right to expect that such authority will be trustworthy and used in the best interests of those who are served. Ministry carries with it spiritual authority, and privileged, if not unique, access to people's homes. Clergy are expected to demonstrate high standards of moral and sexual integrity: those to whom they minister hope and expect, not that those whose vocation comes from God will be 'perfect' or beyond the reach of ordinary human complexity in relationships but that they should at least embody a mature and careful Christian understanding of the responsibility to respect and honor all members of their community." (Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI), 2002)

Among the signs that can potentially indicate neglect or abuse are:

Neglect: External characteristics: first, the condition of clothing such as clothes that are too small and/or dirty. Also, personal hygiene is an indicator. Especially apparent is the condition of hair, finger- and toenails. In addition, it should be observed whether a child is dressed appropriately to his or her age. E.g. does it still wear diapers at the age of 5.

Abuse: Injuries which are not consistent with those normally acquired by a child in play, frequent injury or unexplained serious injury, or behavioral changes, including regressive, precociously sexual or withdrawn behavior. Such signs, while they may also have an alternative explanation, require an evaluation of the possibility of abuse.

Directors, staff and volunteers in the Vicariates must be aware of the varied forms of abuse, of the risks of abuse, and of signs or behaviors which could indicate abuse, and be ready to act by reporting any confirmed or suspected abuse and stopping it.

The following general procedures are therefore implemented by the Joint Child Safeguarding Policy of VMAS and SJV:

- It will be made an integral part of the rules and regulations governing the management of the Saint James Vicariate and VMAS and the legally binding instructions it contains.
- The Saint James Vicariate and VMAS form a joint child safeguarding committee. This Committee formulates policy, reviews policies and procedures and deals with any complaints of abuse that are submitted to it.
- The Vicariates are obligated to employ only those persons who are capable and willing to put all policies and procedures into practice without hesitation.
- Job descriptions clearly describe the nature of the position and expectations of the tasks, underlining the existence of a strict child safeguarding policy for all positions in the organization.
- References about the applicant from past employment are required, and the identity of the references are verified.
- New staff or volunteers are screened by personal interviews and by providing clearance that they can work with babies, children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- New staff and volunteers are guided through a close reading of the policies and procedures and are encouraged to clarify all outstanding issues and concerns.
- New staff and volunteers must sign a copy of the policies and procedures, assenting to their content, committing to their implementation and waiving any reservations, privileges or rights to fail to fully conform to these policies and procedures.
- New staff and volunteers are employed for a trial period of three months, and among the important criteria for continuing employment is the full implementation of these policies and procedures.
- Ongoing training and discussion of issues related to baby, child, young people, and vulnerable adult protection is a part and parcel of employment in both Vicariates.
- Failure to fully implement these policies and procedures is sufficient reason for being dismissed.
- All partners of the Saint James Vicariate and VMAS will be asked to adopt a child safeguarding policy that meets the standards of the Vicariates' own policy in this matter.
- A copy of the child safeguarding policy will be posted on the websites of the Saint James Vicariate and VMAS.
- All facilities hosting groups of babies, children, young people and vulnerable adults will display contact details for reporting possible abuse and all Vicariate staff and volunteers will have contact details for reporting.
- A reporting procedure is put in place to investigate and deal with possible abuse.

- The policies and procedures will be reviewed, approved and endorsed by the Joint Child Safeguarding Committee annually.

REPORTING PROCEDURE

Procedure of receiving a complaint/concern.

Handling of a complaint.

Mitigating risks.

VMAS and SJV, its Vicars, staff, and volunteers recognize the following principles:

- The welfare of the baby, child, young person, and vulnerable adult is paramount. This commitment is based upon the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Israeli legislation and the KCS International Child Safeguarding Standards.
- All babies, children, youth, and vulnerable adults, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all kinds of harm or abuse.
- Some babies, children, young people and adults are additionally vulnerable and thus need more protection because of the impact of former experience, their level of dependency, social/ economic/ citizenship status, communication needs or other issues.
- Working in partnership with babies, children, young people, their parents, caregivers and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of the babies, children and young people.
- No baby, child, young person or vulnerable adult, group of babies, children or young people must be treated any less favorably than others in getting what is needed for their welfare.
- All babies, children, young people or vulnerable adults should be treated with respect and taught to respect themselves and one another.
- All babies, children, young people or vulnerable adults without exception have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or belief.
- All concerns, and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by the Saint James Vicariate and VMAS, their directors, staff and volunteers and an appropriate response will be provided.
- These policies and procedures will be reviewed, approved and endorsed by the 'Joint Child Safeguarding Committee' annually.

Code of Conduct

Both Vicariates' commitment to child safeguarding will be guided by the following:

Awareness: The Vicariates must ensure that all staff and partners are aware of the issue and danger of child abuse and the risks to babies, children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Prevention: The Vicariates must ensure, through awareness, supervision and good practice, that their directors, staff, volunteers and partners minimize all risks to babies, children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

Reporting: The Vicariates must ensure that their directors, staff, volunteers and partners are clear on what steps to take when concerns arise regarding the safety of babies, children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

Responding: The Vicariates must ensure that action is taken to support and protect babies, children, young people, and vulnerable adults where concerns of abuse arise.

Further to the above, VMAS and SJV will:

- not permit a person to have access or work with babies, children, young people or vulnerable adults if he/she has been identified as posing a risk to their safety or well-being.
- take seriously all concerns regarding babies, children, young people or vulnerable adult abuse which may arise.
- ensure that any concern regarding suspected or reported abuse is passed on to the focal persons or members of the committee.
- act appropriately and effectively in initiating or cooperating with any subsequent process of investigation.
- be guided throughout the child safeguarding process by the principle of 'what is in the best interest of the child'.
- take positive steps to ensure the safeguarding of babies, children, young people or vulnerable adults who are the subject of any concerns.
- support babies, children, young people, vulnerable adults, staff or other adults who raise concerns or who are the subject of concern.
- listen to and take seriously the views and wishes of babies, children, young people, and vulnerable adults.
- work in partnership with parents/caregivers and/or other professionals to ensure the safeguarding of vulnerable persons.

While providing its services, the staff and volunteers of VMAS and SJV will:

- treat babies, children, young people, and vulnerable adults with respect regardless of race, color, sex, language, religion, sexual orientation, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
- educate children and young people to treat themselves and others with respect. This will include (in an age-appropriate manner) education as to what constitutes inappropriate physical contact or behavior, their right to refuse any contact which makes them feel uncomfortable, and the importance of reporting any such contact to a responsible adult.
- not use language or behavior towards babies, children, young people or vulnerable adults that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- not engage babies, children, young people, or vulnerable adults in any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts.
- wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of babies, children or young people.
- not invite unaccompanied babies, children or young people into the private quarters of the Vicariates' directors, staff or volunteers unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.
- not sleep in the same room with babies, children or young people unless another adult is present. In cases where this is not possible, due to logistical constraints, the staff member must obtain the director's permission, and the door must be always left open. In any case, doors must be left unlocked.
- not engage in any physical abuse of babies, children and young people, including physical punishment or acts of discipline that involve physical force. Sometimes adults are obligated to intervene physically to protect children and young people from danger against themselves and against other people and to contain their violence. They will do this only in case of real need and with the maximum respect for the safety of all involved.
- not shame babies, children, young people or vulnerable adults, humiliate them, or practice other emotional abuse.
- not get involved in any compromise settlement with parents, abusers, or authorities when a baby, child or young person is abused.
- not show favoritism or discriminate against any baby, child, young person or vulnerable adult any group of babies, children or young people.
- only use any computers, mobile phones, or video and digital cameras appropriately, and never exploit or harass children or access child pornography through any medium.

- refrain from hiring children or young people for any reason, including domestic or other labor which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with the time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.
- comply with all relevant legislation, including laws regulating appropriate behavior with babies, children and young people, laws defining abuse and labor laws in relation to child labor.
- report concerns or allegations of child abuse immediately to local authorities where required by law, in accordance with appropriate procedures, as well as in any case where the Joint Child Safeguarding Committee determines that involvement of the local authorities will be in the child's best interest.
- take children and vulnerable adults seriously when they tell us about abuse and get help for them. If the abuser is a part of staff or volunteers at any of the Vicariates, the Vicariate must ensure to report that person and make sure that the abuse stops.
- protect private information about a child or vulnerable adult always ensuring confidentiality about personal information outside the professional context. Confidentiality about reporting on abuse cannot be guaranteed.
- the babies, children, youth and vulnerable adults come from a variety of communities, cultures and languages and the staff and volunteers must deepen their understanding of the cultural particularities of each community to guarantee both safeguarding the children and respect for their communities of origin.

Code of Conduct within the Pastoral Context

- All the above applies to babies, children, youth and vulnerable adults attending any religious or other activity under the responsibility of the Saint James Vicariate or VMAS.
- Parents/caregivers are to be encouraged to accompany their children to parish activities.
- Assistance with intimate functions (diapering, accompanying to toilet, etc.) is to be performed by the accompanying parent/caregiver whenever possible, and if necessary, by a member of the Vicariate childcare staff in accordance with the above guidelines.
- Community outings which include babies, children or youth should ensure that enough adults are present wherever possible.
- Children and youth involved in specific activities, such as serving at Mass, will prepare in an area with doors open which are easily accessible or visible to parish members.
- Any private conversation (including confession) between children, young people or vulnerable adults and a priest or adult counselor will take place in public parish facilities, at an hour when other adults are regularly present. At all times, doors should be left unlocked (ajar when possible, without infringing on the child/ youth's right to privacy).

- Both Vicariates' communities will display contact details for reporting possible child abuse; the priest responsible for the community and community council members will also have the contact details for reporting.

Code of Conduct concerning Children's images

When photographing or filming a baby, child, young person or vulnerable person for purposes of publication or fund raising, the Vicariate director, staff and volunteers must:

- before photographing or filming, obtain consent from the child, young person, vulnerable adult or a parent or guardian of the baby, child or young person. Explanation on how the photograph, video clip or film will be used must be given.
- ensure that photographs, films, videos and DVDs present babies, children, young people, and vulnerable adults in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Babies, children, young people, and vulnerable adults should be adequately clothed and not in bodily poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive.
- ensure that the images are honest representations of the context and the facts.
- ensure that when sending images electronically, identifying information about a baby, child, young person, or vulnerable adult is not revealed.
- babies, children, youth, and vulnerable adults must be protected from the exploitation of their images and personal data collected by the Vicariates on social media. A particular risk is the establishment of a one-on-one relationship with a baby, child, young person or vulnerable adult on social media.

Conclusion

The Saint James Vicariate and VMAS directors, staff and volunteers, in addition to all the above will use common sense to avoid actions or behaviors that could be construed as child abuse and will maintain awareness as to any signs that could indicate that a child is subject to abuse within the Vicariates' program or elsewhere. The directors, staff and volunteers will report any suspected cases of child abuse to the Joint Child Safeguarding Committee of the Saint James Vicariate and VMAS whenever the need arises.

• *Joint Child Safeguarding Committee*

This committee is composed of both the Latin Patriarchal Vicars, the director of the St. Rachel Center for children and youth under VMAS, the human resources manager of VMAS, the coordinator of the youth activities at St. James Vicariate, the coordinator for the youth work at both VMAS and the St. James Vicariate, as well as a physician who is a member of the Saint James Vicariate.

- *Focal persons*

There will be at least two Focal Persons (one male, one female) whose contact numbers will be made publicly available in all Saint James Vicariate and VMAS sites. These, as well as any member of the Joint Child Safeguarding Committee who becomes aware of a safeguarding concern.

Babu Joseph OFM Cap (VMAS)

Dr. Rivka Karplus (Vicariate St James)

are the responsible focal persons to receive and manage any safeguarding concerns and subsequent inquiry. Initial concerns and complaints are raised with one of the focal persons who then forward them to the committee.

All new staff members and volunteers must be introduced to the policies and procedures detailed above. It will be the task of the professional social worker to ensure that new staff and volunteers are guided through a close reading of the policies and procedures and are encouraged to clarify all outstanding issues and concerns so that they are fully aware about how to act, how to prevent abuse, how to report on abuse and how to seek help in dealing with the issues raised. In addition, the child safeguarding officer from the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land will give child safeguarding training to staff and volunteers every 6 months.

Likewise, the above detailed description of policies and procedures define the professional boundaries that are delineated in the Vicariates when working with babies, children, young people and vulnerable adults and what is and is not acceptable behavior.

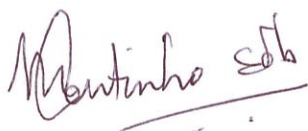
Children and youth will be introduced to their rights and ways to report neglect or abuse. The code of conduct is formulated in language appropriate to children as well.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

This policy was last reviewed on: September 30th, 2024



Signed: Fr. Piotr Zelazko,
Patriarchal Vicar for the Saint James Vicariate



Signed: Fr. Matthew Coutinho
Patriarchal Vicar for the Migrants and Asylum Seekers

