



Circle of Friends Australia Inc

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CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CIRCLE OF FRIENDS AUSTRALIA INC (COFA)

INTRODUCTION

This Code of Conduct articulates the way members/volunteers conduct themselves in their role as Circle members within COFA and within the individual Circles of Friends.

All COFA members must read and sign this Code of Conduct.

ROLE OF COFA MEMBERS/VOLUNTEERS

- It must be made clear to refugees and asylum seekers that as members/volunteers of COFA, we are community members who wish to assist and support them in whatever way we can, including helping them to make connections to the services they may need.
- We cannot provide professional advice, unless we are qualified to do so.

VALUES AND BEHAVIOUR OF MEMBERS/VOLUNTEERS

- **SHOW RESPECT.** Many members of the refugee and asylum seeker community are from vastly different cultures and systems of belief, and often are survivors of traumatic and complex situations in their countries of origin.
Members must ensure that we:
 - are accepting of cultural and religious differences, personal difficulties and stresses
 - understand the difficulties faced by asylum seekers and refugees, both due to their status in Australia and whatever occurred in their countries of origin
 - treat everybody with courtesy, respect and fairness
 - when using an interpreter, direct all questions to the asylum seeker(s) or refugee(s), maintaining eye-contact with them and understanding that the conversation is with them, and not with the interpreter.

- **INTEGRITY.** Refugees and asylum seekers come to COFA for support and we must ensure our work is of the highest possible quality and our dealings are fair. We therefore will ensure that we:
 - always speak clearly, fairly, respectfully, professionally and honestly
 - are reliable in our support, only making commitments which we are sure that we can fulfill them
 - notify both the relevant person and/or the refugee or asylum seeker if we are unable to attend an appointment to which we have committed
 - observe confidentiality, as described below
 - be aware of their need for safety, security and privacy
 - state clearly that we are not migration agents and do not provide migration advice.

- **EMPOWERMENT** The refugees and asylum seekers COFA assists are autonomous and capable, and as volunteers our role is to support them, based on a thorough and sympathetic understanding of their situation. Therefore, we will ensure that:
 - their comfort, understanding and empowerment are our primary concerns
 - we facilitate them to taking steps themselves rather than taking those steps on their behalf
 - we act only in a supportive capacity and explain to them the support we are able to provide;
 - they are comfortable and agree with suggestions we make to support them
 - we do not pressure them to share information with us or disclose information about their reasons for leaving their homelands or applying for protection
 - we are respectful and mindful of their privacy and boundaries.

- **SUPPORT.** Refugees and asylum seekers approaching us for assistance are in need of both emotional and practical support. We will:
 - endeavour to be aware of other services provided by other organisations and refer them to such services when it seems appropriate
 - conduct ourselves in a professional, respectful and supportive manner - be clear that we are here to support them in the community in whatever way they may need and we can provide.

COOPERATION. There are various services and advocates operating within the refugee sector and our role in supporting refugees and asylum seekers is recognising that they may need help accessing these services. Therefore, we will:

- cooperate with other services and, when there is a need, refer asylum seekers or refugees to other organisations.
- understand that when we refer an asylum seeker or refugee to another service, that service has a confidential relationship with him or her.

CONFIDENTIALITY. Volunteers will have access to personal and private information, which is highly confidential. Respecting the privacy of refugees and asylum seekers is a key value for COFA. The possible consequences faced by people whose information is made public are severe. Members should always maintain an awareness of the needs of refugees and asylum seekers for their safety, security and privacy.

Any confidential information relating to asylum seekers and refugees that needs to be kept must be stored safely and securely.

Therefore, we will not disclose any information relating to asylum seekers (including names, personal details, information or facts, which may make their identity known, or other sensitive information) except where:

- it may be necessary to discuss their needs and support options with other Circle members or with qualified members of other relevant organisations to whom the asylum seeker/refugee has given informed consent.
- where there is a legal requirement to disclose information;
- the individual has provided express permission for the information to be disclosed;
- the failure to disclose the information could lead to abuse, harm, injury or death;
- the information pertains to a suspicion that a child or young person has been harmed or may be at risk of harm, in which case a report must be made to the Circle Convenor, the COFA Child Safety Officer and the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 as soon as practicable. If the child or young person is at immediate risk, report to South Australia Police (SAPOL) on 000.
- documents consist of financial reports, applications for assistance, including financial, from COFA or a Circle, and receipts, which need to be transmitted to Circle members and COFA whether electronically or by hard copy, as part of the business of COFA and the Circles.

MEMBERS WHO HAVE CONTACT WITH CHILDREN AND/OR YOUNG PEOPLE

All members/volunteers of COFA who are involved in the support of children or young people on behalf of COFA must:

- Have and maintain an up-to date Working With Children Check

- Have and maintain up-to-date Child Safe Training
- to agree in writing to accept and act in accordance with COFA's Child Safety Environments Policy
- Sign the COFA Code of Conduct
- comply with the organisation's Child Safe Environments Policy at all times and take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people
- treat everyone including those of different race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes and religious beliefs with respect and honesty and that they ensure that equity is upheld
- be a positive role model to children and young people in all conduct with them
- set clear boundaries and maintain appropriate behaviours with children and young people – boundaries help everyone to understand their roles
- listen and respond appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people
- be alert to bullying behaviours and respond promptly and appropriately
- ensure another adult is always present or in sight when conducting one to one consulting, coaching, instruction or other activity
- be alert to children and young people who have been harmed, or may be at risk of harm and report this quickly to the Child Abuse Report Line (13 14 78)
- attend Circle meetings, at which COFA's Child Safety policies and procedures will be discussed
- are required to read and understand the Mandatory Reporting Information Booklet available at:
https://dhs.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/103179/CSE-Mandatory-notification-information-booklet.PDF
- agree to undergo regular performance appraisals to discuss child safeguarding
- must not communicate with children or young people via social media for anything other than official COFA business and any such communication must be copied to the Convenor of the Circle and the parent/guardian of the child/young person;
- comply with any requests/directions from the Convenor of their Circle or the COFA Child Safety Officer
- notify the Convenor of their Circle, the COFA Child Safety Officer and the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 as soon as practicable if they have a suspicion that a child or young person has been harmed or may be at risk of harm. If the child or young person is at immediate risk, report to South Australia Police (SAPOL) on 000.

- **BREACHES OF THIS CODE OF CONDUCT**

If any breach of this Code of Conduct occurs, the person or persons committing the breach will face disciplinary action, including cessation of engagement with the organisation and termination of any employment with COFA.

COFA/CIRCLE VOLUNTEER DECLARATION I have read and understood COFA's Child Safe Environments Policy and the above Code of Conduct. In my work as a Volunteer Support Person with COFA and my Circle, I will comply with the Child Safe Environments Policy and act in accordance with the Code.

Full Name:.....

Contact details:

Circle number and name:

Signature

Date

Date of Receipt by COFA Management Committee