

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR VOLUNTEERS WORKING WITH BENEFICIARIES (ANNEX A)

The following stipulates the Society's expectations of volunteers working with our child, youth or adult beneficiaries (the Beneficiaries). Any volunteers who violates this Code of Conduct will be subject to disciplinary action by the Society.

1 General Behaviour

- 1.1 Volunteers should always maintain good moral conduct and serve as role models for beneficiaries.
- 1.2 Volunteers' activities outside of the volunteer work should not contravene nor affect public confidence in the individual and/or the organisation.
- 1.3 Volunteers will be terminated by the Society if they have committed or found to commit offences that are:
 - provided for in the Children and Young Persons Act, the Women's Charter and the Penal Code (Cap. 224);
 - related to possession of obscene/pornographic materials/child abuse material.
- 1.4 Volunteers who have been charged and/or convicted in any court of law for crimes under, but not limited to, the Registration of Criminals Act may be, in some cases, allowed to continue with the volunteer work but subject to the approval of the Review Committee.
- 1.5 Besides abiding by this Code of Conduct, Volunteers must also observe the Code of Ethics stipulated by the professional bodies that they are registered with (e.g., Singapore Association of Social Workers, Singapore Psychological Society, Singapore Association of Counselling).
- 1.6 It is the responsibility of all volunteers to report any ethical violations to the CEO and the relevant professional body.

2 Dress and Appearance

- 2.1 Dressing and appearance is largely a matter of personal choice. However, to uphold one's professional image and to set a good example for the beneficiaries, volunteers should avoid dressing in a manner that can be offensive or sexually provocative.
- 2.2 To avoid unnecessary distraction or misunderstanding, clothing with messages or pictures that are sexual or anti-social in nature that may be offensive should be avoided. All tattoos should be covered up.

3 Communication

- 3.1 To foster mutual respect between volunteers and beneficiaries, volunteers should be civil in their manner and speech and must not use words or remarks that are offensive or discriminatory that will demean, intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the beneficiaries. In instances where volunteers are specifically tasked to provide personalized care and emotional support to identified beneficiaries, volunteers should still treat all beneficiaries impartially.
- 3.2 Volunteers should be mindful of the beneficiary's age, gender, developmental stage, personality and past experiences, and be wary of their choice of words, tone and pace. This is especially important when dealing with sensitive cases. Volunteers need to also exercise tact, and not be unnecessarily intrusive or coercive when soliciting information from the beneficiaries. Leading questions ought to be avoided.

4 Physical Boundaries

- 4.1 As part of the engagement of the beneficiaries, there may be moments of unavoidable physical contact between volunteers and beneficiaries (e.g., during sports activities). Volunteers are to exercise discretion and be guided by the following principles:
- Male volunteers should not touch female beneficiaries, unless in emergencies such as a fire evacuation or a medical emergency.
 - Whether male or female volunteers, there should be no unwarranted and inappropriate touching of the beneficiaries.
 - Intent of the physical contact/touches shall be for appropriate comfort, reassurance, encouragement with no possibility of harm, and must be restricted to the head, shoulder, upper back, arms and hands of the beneficiaries.
 - As far as possible, settings should be at spaces where other volunteers are present or areas with adequate surveillance.
 - Volunteers should not touch private and sensitive areas of the body of the beneficiaries under any circumstances, except when under the explicit instruction of the Centre Head in medical emergencies.
 - It is important for volunteers to understand the history of the beneficiaries to ensure that any form of touch will not be misinterpreted as a threat (given that some of the beneficiaries may have experienced sexual abuse in the past) or encouragement to engage in inappropriate activity.

Body Checks

- At least 2 volunteers should be present when body searches / checks are conducted.
- Male volunteers are strictly not allowed to conduct body searches / checks on female beneficiaries.

Sexual Contact

- Any form of sexual contact or advances is strictly prohibited. Any sexual misconduct made towards a beneficiary will be reported to the police and is subjected to police investigation.

- 4.2 Staff should not leave Volunteers alone with beneficiaries. If the situation does not allow for this, a buddy system should be in place to have 2 volunteers paired up for activities involving direct contact with beneficiaries. When there is a need for one-to-one contact with a beneficiary (e.g. during counselling sessions, or when volunteers engages a beneficiary one-on-one), it is important to ensure that another volunteers is kept informed of the session. Room doors should not be locked during these one-to-one sessions.
- 4.3 Volunteers should also respect the privacy and dignity of the beneficiaries, notwithstanding their duty to ensure safety and compliance to rules. This will include being mindful when entering private areas such as bathrooms, toilets or any areas where beneficiaries may not be fully dressed. Male volunteers are not allowed under any circumstances to enter any area where female beneficiaries may be engaged in bathing, changing, sleeping or toileting, except in emergencies, and under the instruction of the Centre Head as well as in the presence of at least one female volunteers.
- 4.4 All precautions should be taken to avoid any misunderstanding or allegation against volunteers of the Society. These include avoiding any form of physically or verbally intrusive behaviour, or unwarranted physical contact with the beneficiaries.

5 Professional Boundaries

- 5.1 While engaging beneficiaries in meaningful and therapeutic relationships, volunteers must ensure that professional boundaries are maintained to avoid misunderstandings. The following good practices serve as a guide to help volunteers stay within the worker-client relationship:

- Volunteers should not buy gifts or items of significant monetary value for the beneficiaries in their personal capacity.
- Volunteers should not borrow from or lend to beneficiaries any personal belongings, including money.
- Volunteers should not assist the beneficiaries in buying goods or services, unless with approval from the Centre Head in exceptional cases. The exceptions are not extended to prohibited items like cigarettes or pornographic materials.
- Beneficiaries should not take volunteers' personal transport (e.g. car rides) or vice versa due to concerns over liability and, insurance coverage. Exceptions are allowed only in an emergency and / or subjected to the approval of Centre Head.

- 5.2 Volunteers should also refrain from using their working relationship to promote their personal values and beliefs (e.g., proselytise).
- 5.3 Volunteers or former volunteers shall not, under any circumstances, engage in close personal relationships (including sexual contact) with beneficiaries and/or former beneficiaries. In circumstances where such relationships have materialised, it is incumbent on the volunteers / former volunteers to prove that there is neither exploitation nor harm. Where necessary, volunteers / former volunteers should undertake supervision / professional consultations to address issues relating to authority, power and exploitation.
- 5.4 When a volunteer is assigned the duty to provide continuous support to former beneficiaries (such as after-care follow-up), the volunteer acts as a representative of the Society and should uphold the conduct stipulated in this Code of Conduct. It is essential that the volunteer duly updates the Centre Head on the content and outcome of the engagement.
- 5.5 Similar professional boundaries must be maintained with the beneficiaries' families, and significant others.

6 Discipline

- 6.1 Under no circumstances should volunteers do the following in the name of discipline:
- Hit or physically assault a beneficiary.
 - Shout at a beneficiary except in emergencies to catch the beneficiary's attention.
 - Use vulgarities at a beneficiary.
 - Emotionally abuse a beneficiary by ignoring or rejecting him/her or threatening him/her in ways that could result in emotional harm.
 - Use derogatory or discriminatory words that attack a beneficiary's personal attributes, race, religion, culture, nationality, sexual orientation, age, gender, marital status, mental & physical abilities or political beliefs.
 - Humiliate a beneficiary in front of other beneficiaries or praise a beneficiary in front of other beneficiaries with the intention of demeaning the other beneficiaries.
 - Subject a beneficiary to overly strenuous tasks or activities.
- 6.2 Volunteers are not to abuse their power and authority by carrying out inappropriate disciplinary measures as a form of personal attack against a beneficiary.
- 6.3 Discipline should be developmentally appropriate and in accordance with best practices and with approval from the Centre Head.

7 Safety of the Beneficiaries

- 7.1 The physical safety of beneficiaries is of paramount importance. All injuries suffered by the beneficiaries must be duly reported and treated, regardless of the cause of the injuries. Centre Head is to ensure that significant injuries sustained during the services/programmes are documented in incident reports. Parents/Guardians of the beneficiaries are to be duly informed of the injuries.
- 7.2 Volunteers must not bully beneficiaries. Volunteers should also prevent the beneficiaries from bullying one another. Allegations of bullying by volunteers must be reported to Centre Head or Higher Management and be thoroughly investigated.
- 7.3 A child beneficiary below the age of four should not be left alone or with other beneficiaries without adult supervision.

8 Evaluation and Research

- 8.1 Volunteers who engage in evaluation and research shall adhere to relevant organisational guidelines or ethical review processes to protect participants. Guidelines include the following:
- Respect and maintain the confidentiality of all research data
 - Keep all research information confidential by not discussing or sharing the information in any form or format with anyone other than the relevant volunteers.
 - Do not make copies of data in any form or format unless specifically requested to do so by Centre Head.
 - Keep all raw data that contain identifiable information in any form or format secure when they are in your possession.
 - Keep soft copy data in password-protected files and hard copy data in secured locations.
 - Close any computer programmes and documents containing such data when volunteers step away from the computer temporarily.
 - Use closed headphones when transcribing recordings or interviews.
 - Return all data to the Research Unit when the tasks have been completed.
- 8.2 Where possible, volunteers should obtain written consent from participants.
- 8.3 Volunteers shall provide appropriate measures to ensure that the rights of participants are protected e.g. where beneficiary is too young to give consent, volunteers shall obtain written consent from an appropriate proxy or guardian.
- 8.4 Volunteers shall observe confidentiality, voluntariness, informed consent, and respect to participants when engaging them in evaluation or research work.
- 8.5 Volunteers shall ensure that appropriate steps are taken during evaluation and research to minimise possibility of harm to participants. Steps shall also be taken to ensure that participants have access to supportive services to address any discomfort that may arise from the evaluation and research participation process.
- 8.6 Volunteers shall report on the evaluation and research findings factually and accurately.

9 Confidentiality

- 9.1 All information obtained during one's service should be used for sole purpose of the volunteer work and not discussed in casual conversation. These include information obtained verbally, as well as those documented in official reports. Access to written information should be restricted to those who require it for the volunteer work purposes and not shared with any external party unless there is a valid reason and approval is obtained from the Centre Head.

- 9.2 Information on the beneficiaries should be accessed only when necessary, and not to fulfil personal curiosity or for any other purpose.
- 9.3 All information obtained from the beneficiaries must be kept confidential as far as possible. In circumstances when it is not possible to withhold information, for example when such information must be shared with the caregivers in the best interest of the beneficiaries, beneficiaries should be briefed on the limitations to confidentiality.
- 9.4 Communication with external parties (e.g., external supervisors, other stakeholders) on matters pertaining to beneficiaries are limited to the purpose of learning or collaborating for the benefit of the beneficiaries

10 Financial Integrity

Personal gifts, money or favours should not be solicited or accepted from the beneficiaries or their families. In the event whereby it is difficult to refuse a gift, this should be declared in writing to the respective Centre Head for their advice on the course of action.