

Centacare
Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn



Helping People

Code of Ethics and
Conduct for
Centacare Employees

Code of Ethics and Conduct

This Code of Ethics and Conduct for Centacare employees describes the ethical principles, values and practices that underpin the Mission of Centacare for the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. It covers Centacare employees and volunteers and supersedes any Code of Ethics and Conduct previously issued by Centacare.

The purpose of the Code of Ethics and Conduct is to provide Centacare employees and volunteers with an ethical framework for acceptable behaviour and decision-making. As it is not possible to cover every situation with which employees may be confronted during their employment with Centacare, the Code of Ethics and Conduct must be read in conjunction with Centacare policies and procedures and with relevant legislation.

Overarching Centacare employees' responsibilities is their "duty of care" in the workplace. This is Centacare's and its employee's obligation to act reasonably in all circumstances to avoid foreseeable harm or injury to another person. That is, they are to ensure the safety of clients and other employees where reasonably possible. Employees are not to place themselves at risk through their intervention, such as removing weapons or physically stopping a fight.

Compliance with the Code of Ethics and Conduct is a Condition of Employment for all Centacare employees, and of the engagement of volunteers.

Mission

Centacare is a welfare agency of the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn. Our Mission is to uphold the Catholic Church's belief in the dignity of each person:

- to deliver services;
- to advocate for those less advantaged; and
- to assist people to participate in the community.

Structure

Centacare's core values are set out on the next page. The following pages provide a theoretical framework for ethical conduct under six headings. They are not mutually exclusive, but interrelated, and incorporate aspects of all major areas of professional practice. They are:

- (i) Working with Clients/Consumers
- (ii) Professional Status
- (iii) Relationship with Centacare
- (iv) Commitment to Social Justice
- (v) Inappropriate behaviour
- (vi) Working with Children

CORE VALUES

Centacare's values define the way that its people relate to the community, clients and to each other as managers, employees and colleagues. Centacare values:

- *We recognise that each individual has a unique worth, the right to life, to well-being, dignity and to participate in the life of society.....***Social Justice**

- *We promote the highest possible degree of autonomy and self-determination in individuals, families and communities.....***Empowerment**

- *We make our services available to all people, whatever their race, their ethnic background, their creed, or their disability.....***Equality**

- *We work with individuals, groups, and social agencies outside the Church on issues, policies and programs that are compatible with Centacare's Mission.....***Collaboration**

- *We work together and support each other to uphold Centacare's values to best position us in pursuing Centacare's Mission.....***Solidarity**

- *We use a holistic approach to care that places importance on life's purpose and meaning, and building a sense of well being and inner peace for our clients.....***Spirituality**

- *We aspire to the highest standard of service to others through leadership, commitment, innovation and achievement, as well as ensuring ongoing work competence of employees through education and professional development.....***Excellence**

- *We recognise the unique differences and needs of each individual client to appropriately target our services.....***Person Centred Approach**

(i) WORKING WITH CLIENTS/CONSUMERS

Centacare employees are to ensure that the welfare and wellbeing of clients is paramount at all times. Clients are to be empowered to make their own choices about access to services by employees (to the best of their ability) providing them with full and accurate information about services available (both internal & external).

Confidentiality

- Employees must not divulge, either during employment with, or after leaving, Centacare, any confidential information gained as a Centacare employee that could adversely affect Centacare's services or clients or standing in the community.
- Where employees cannot maintain confidentiality, for legal or other serious reasons, the limits of confidentiality will be explained to the client

Relationships

- Employees will not jeopardise or undermine professional relationships by, for example, blurring professional boundaries or participating in dual relationships with clients.
- Employees will only continue a professional relationship when the client's needs are still being served
- Employees must avoid any form of physical contact with clients or other persons that may violate professional boundaries, result in intentional or unintentional emotional or psychological harm, or damage the professional relationship.
- Employees must not engage in any form of inappropriate interaction or conduct with children, young people or vulnerable adults that may lead to physical, emotional or other harm or damage
- Employees must not take clients or their family members to visit them in their home, or to encourage them to visit their home. Employees must not give their home phone numbers to their clients.

Research

- Research involving clients of Centacare should be undertaken only with the approval of the Program Manager and the Director. Any research undertaken which involves participation by clients will ensure that the dignity of the individual is respected. No research procedures likely to cause distress should be used under any circumstances.

Respect

- Employees will always act for the good of the client and will not exploit professional relationships for personal advantage or gain.
- Employees will not have sexual relationships with clients
- Employees will respect the rights of all disadvantaged people in our community including those with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those with a physical or intellectual disability, and those with mental health issues.

ii) PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Competencies

- Employees will honestly represent their competence, qualifications, training or experience and not undertake any work beyond their professional competence.
- All employees, including those engaged in teaching, supervision and training of other employees, will maintain high standards of professional conduct and will always strive to improve proficiency in professional practice.
- Employees will make full use of the support mechanisms provided as a means of developing and maintaining practice competence.
- Employees will act with due regard to the needs, special competencies and obligations of their colleagues in their own and other professions.

Misconduct/Complaints

- Centacare employees have a responsibility to seek advice immediately from a manager/coordinator in any suspected cases of improper conduct. Improper conduct is that conduct which may involve illegal conduct or a breach of this Code in a matter serious enough to warrant disciplinary action.
- Employees must uphold the rights of people to evaluate, complain and/or question any service they may receive from Centacare or any other agency, institution or instrumentality and assist them in making complaints through the appropriate channels.
- Employees must inform their Program Manager if any event/factor prevents them from fully performing their job (e.g. loss of drivers licence).

Solidarity

- Employees who disagree with a colleague on professional issues will refrain from making public criticism or casting doubt on the colleague's professional competence.

Informed Consent

- Employees must ensure that they understand the principles of informed consent and the circumstances in which informed consent may be required.

(iii) RELATIONSHIP WITH CENTACARE

External Work

- Any work outside Centacare, paid or voluntary, should only be undertaken with the approval of the employee's Program Manager. In addition, permission from the Manager is needed to use relationships established through employment at Centacare to promote other business interests. Similarly, Centacare has a right to be aware of other employment commitments of potential employees.

Gifts/Gratuities

- Employees must not accept from clients, suppliers, donors or sponsors or other persons who they come into contact with in the course of their employment with

Centacare, any private fees, gratuities or any other remuneration unless authorisation to do so has been provided in writing by the Director.

- Employees must not give gifts to, or accept gifts from clients (including children) for whom they currently provide care or services, clients to whom they have previously provided care or services, or clients who have received care or services from another Centacare employee, except where giving or receiving the gift is consistent with the role of the employee and has been approved by the Program Manager.
- Fees may not be received by individual employees for:
 - Services delivered within or outside Centacare to Centacare clients.
 - Referring clients to other services.

Conflicts of Interest

- Employees must disclose to a Program Manager any real or apparent conflict between personal or family interest and official duty that has arisen or has the potential to arise.
- While it is acknowledged that there may be close personal relationships between some employees, it is important that employees involved in such relationships must not allow this to jeopardise either the delivery of services or the reputation of Centacare.
- Employees will not solicit the clients of colleagues or of other agencies.

Responsibility

- Employees must use and maintain Centacare property and resources responsibly and accept accountability for the use of these resources.

Public Statements

- Employees must not make public statements on behalf of Centacare or make statements in public arenas that are in conflict with the stated aims of Centacare.

(iv) COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Employees will act to prevent and eliminate discrimination against any person or group.
- Employees will advocate for changes in policy, service delivery and social conditions, which enhance opportunities for those most vulnerable and disadvantaged in the community.
- Employees will promote and practice procedures that encourage respect for the diversity of cultures within Australian society.

(v) INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

Employees should be conscious of the vulnerability of our clients. Employees need to ensure their conduct does not leave them open to allegations of misconduct. While the following is not intended to be exhaustive, it is a reminder of appropriate and inappropriate conduct (some of which is illegal) in some important areas:

- **Alcohol:** Employees who are adversely affected by alcohol are not allowed to work. Alcohol is to be used responsibly at Centacare social functions. Employees must use discretion when assisting clients to access alcohol in a social setting.
- **Illegal drugs:** Employees are not to give or provide clients with illegal drugs, or to use any of these substances whilst on duty and responsible for clients. Being on duty while under the influence of illegal drugs could create safety and other risks.
- **Language:** The use of appropriate language is important while working with clients or other employees to encourage respect and a welcoming environment. Inappropriate language such as the use of obscene, culturally sensitive, hostile or sexually suggestive language, or of a nature that may constitute harassment or cause humiliation is to be avoided.
- **Sexual and other personal relations with clients:** Employees will not have sexual relationships with clients or engage in improper conduct. Improper conduct of a sexual nature in relation to a client includes
 - unwarranted and inappropriate touching
 - inappropriate conversations of a sexual nature
 - suggestive remarks or actions including showing publications, electronic media, or illustrations which are sexually suggestive
 - jokes of a sexual nature
 - obscene gestures
 - sexual exhibitionism
 - personal correspondence with a client in respect of the employee's feelings (including sexual feelings) for the client
 - deliberate exposure of clients to sexual behaviour of others, other than in the case of approved teaching material specified in a program policy document.

If an employee becomes aware of the possibility of a client having a 'crush' on them, they should share this knowledge or concern with their Program Manager to enable the situation to be effectively managed in a sensitive and supportive manner. The question of continuation of care should to be addressed.

- **Restraint:** Sometimes an employee in ensuring duty of care may find it necessary to use reasonable force (for example, restraining a client from harming him or herself or from harming others). All employees using physical interventions are responsible for the manner in which they exercise that authority. The use of more than reasonable force or restraint may be considered unlawful and not covered by the defences of self-defence or necessity.

(vi) WORKING WITH CHILDREN

Centacare requires employees working with children to, at all times, demonstrate the utmost respect for the child and parent/guardian. They must not do anything that would directly harm or otherwise injure the child. Centacare will take disciplinary action (including possible dismissal) against any employee found to have acted inappropriately towards a child who is currently, or was previously, in receipt of services from Centacare.

- ***Alcohol/Tobacco:*** Children are not to be given or provided with alcohol or tobacco whilst in the care of a Centacare employee. This directive applies irrespective of whether the care is provided on Centacare premises, in the child's home, on a field trip or at any other location.
- ***Appropriate language:*** Centacare employees must not swear or use inappropriate words that could, in the opinion of a reasonable person, offend or unsettle the child. Such words include words said in respect to a person's race, gender, sexual preference, age and physical or intellectual disability.
- ***Drugs:*** Employees must not give or provide children with illegal drugs and must not use or possess illegal drugs whilst on duty and caring for children. This directive applies irrespective of where the care is being provided and includes overnight camps.
- ***Gifts:*** Employees must act in accordance with the policies relating to gifts set out in Section (iii) Gifts/Gratuities of this document.
- ***Medication:*** Employees must ensure that children in receipt of services provided by Centacare do not have access to, or receive, medications that are not prescribed for the child.
- ***Neglect:*** Employees must not neglect children for whom they are providing care or services. 'Neglect' in this context means failing to properly supervise or attend to the needs of the child; to omit to do something through indifference or carelessness or to fail to properly carry out or perform one's duties in relation to the child.
- ***Out of Hours work/Activities:*** Except with the approval of their Program Manager, employees must not engage in paid or unpaid work out of hours that involves contact with a child in receipt, or previously in receipt of, Centacare services. Employees must not contact a child in receipt of, or previously in receipt of, care or services provided by Centacare except in the course of their duties for Centacare.
- ***Physical Contact with Children:*** This should be restricted to contact required/necessary in the course of providing medication to the child or age appropriate support to the child. Physical contact with children must be appropriate to the situation, context and needs of the child.
- ***Psychological harm to children:*** Employees should not engage in any conduct that could cause psychological harm to a child. Examples include:
 - unequal dealing with one child, such as favouritism;
 - using strong emotional or hostile reactions towards a child
 - harassment or humiliation of a child
- ***Restraint:*** Employees must not unnecessarily cause a child within their care to be restrained or to be restrained with undue or inappropriate force.

- ***Sexual or other personal relations with children:*** Employees must not have sexual relations or have inappropriate contact with a child in receipt of, or previously in receipt of, Centacare services. Examples of inappropriate behaviour are set out earlier under Section (v)“Inappropriate Conduct”.

Breaches of the Code of Ethics and Conduct

1. Where non-compliance is reported and proven, then appropriate remedial action will be taken. This may involve counselling or retraining, in the case of unintentional and less serious breaches of the Code, mediation or disciplinary action, through to dismissal and/or notification to an external agency including Registration Boards, Government agencies and the police where applicable, in the case of intentional and/or serious breaches.
2. Responsibility for dealing with breaches of the Code of Ethics and Conduct rests with Program Managers in the first instance. Where a Program Manager considers a matter to be serious they must immediately report the matter to the Assistant Director.
3. Agencies such as Centacare are required through the Head of Agency, to report Allegations of Reportable Conduct that occur in NSW to the NSW Ombudsman under the provisions of the Ombudsman Act 1974 (Section 25). Reportable Conduct is –
 - a) Any sexual offence or sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child (including a child pornography offence); or
 - b) Any assault, ill treatment, or neglect of a child; or
 - c) Any behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child, whether or not, in any case, with the consent of the child.