

**VULNERABLE ADULTS' SAFEGUARDING
POLICY**

RDIS

Rural Development Inter-Diocesan Service
A Holy Soul in a Healthy Body

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1. Introduction

Rural Development Inter- Diocesan Service (RDIS) is dedicated to implementing and promoting measures to protect the right of all service users to be treated with dignity and respect and is committed to ensuring that the organization provides a safe environment which is free from all forms of abuse, including discrimination, stalking, harassment or sexual harassment, neglect and mistreatment.

In achieving this aim, RDIS is committed to ensuring that there are policies, procedures, guidance and training for staff and service users that prevent any violation of this right RDIS acknowledges that a service user may be experiencing harm or abuse at home, in the community, or in some other service. RDIS will support employees/volunteers to recognize when someone is experiencing harm or abuse and to report these concerns in line with this policy.

2. Purpose

In order to implement the policy, the Rural Development Inter- Diocesan Service will work:

- to promote the freedom and dignity of the person who has or is experiencing abuse
- to promote the rights of all people to live free from abuse and coercion
- to ensure the safety and well being of people who do not have the capacity to decide how they want to respond to abuse that they are experiencing
- to manage services in a way which promotes safety and prevents abuse
- to recruit staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- to provide effective management of staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training
- to raise public awareness so that communities as a whole, alongside professionals, play their part in identifying and preventing abuse and neglect of adults
- to provide information and support in accessible ways to help people understand the different types of abuse, how to stay safe and what to do to raise a concern about the safety or well-being of an adult

3. Implementation and Monitoring

For Rural Development Inter- Diocesan Service to successfully implement the policy:

- will ensure that all management committee members, staff, volunteers, service users, and families are familiar with this policy and procedures
- will act within confidentiality and will usually gain permission from service users before sharing information about them with another agency or organization
- will pass information to Adult and Culture Services when more than one person is at risk For example: if the concern relates to a worker, volunteer or organization who provides a service to vulnerable adults or children
- will inform service users that where a person is in danger, a child is at risk or a crime has been committed then a decision may be taken to pass information to another agency without the service user's consent
- will endeavor to keep up to date with national developments relating to preventing abuse and welfare of adults
- will ensure that the Designated Named Person understands his/her responsibility to refer incidents of adult abuse to the relevant statutory agencies (Police/Adult and Culture Services Directorate)

4. Principles of RDIS work for safeguarding adults

- **Empowerment:** Supporting and encouraging people to make their own decisions and give informed consent.
- **Prevention:** In safeguarding adults, RDIS takes action before harm occurs where possible.
- **Proportionality:** RDIS uses the least disruptive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- **Protection:** RDIS supports and represents those in greatest need.
- **Partnership:** RDIS uses local solutions through services working for their communities and ensures that communities play a part in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
- **Accountability:** RDIS is committed to accountability and transparency when safeguarding adults.

5. Procedures

For the purpose of this policy, abuse is considered to be any form of behavior that causes harm or distress. Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated over a period of time, it may take one form or a multiple of forms. It may be physical, sexual, psychological/emotional or financial abuse. It may constitute neglect and/or poor professional practice. It may take the form of incidents of poor or unsatisfactory professional practice, at one end of the spectrum, through to pervasive ill treatment or gross misconduct at the other.

Abuse may take place in many different settings, the home, community, work place setting or service centre etc. it may be perpetrated by parents, siblings, family members, neighbors, professionals, volunteers etc. Situations are rarely as straightforward as these categories and many situations may involve a combination of abuse elements.

6. Concerns of Abuse

Good protection practice means that employees/volunteers know how to recognize abuse. This does not mean that they are responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has taken place-even for an expert that is a difficult decision-but they have a responsibility to be alert to behavior by service users or workers which suggests that something is wrong. An employee/volunteer/service user may become concerned for the safety of a service user in a number of circumstances:

- An employee/volunteer may witness abuse;
- A third party informs the employee/volunteer of their concerns/suspicions regarding a service user;
- A service user discloses to a third party who informs the employee/volunteer; A service user discloses to an employee/volunteer that he/she is being abused;
- An employee/volunteer may overhear other people/service users discussing their concerns about a particular incident, employee/volunteer or other service user;
- An employee/volunteer becomes suspicious of unexplained injuries, behavior or explanations that clearly lead to concerns for the well being of the service user.

There are several forms of abuse any or all of which may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance.

These include:

a) Neglect and Acts of Omission

Neglect can include ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health care, entitlements, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

b) Emotional/Psychological Abuse

A person may be emotionally abused by a person providing care, a neighbor, and relative or in the relationship between an employee/volunteer and a service user. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms. Examples of emotional abuse may include:

- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- Unresponsiveness;
- Failure to show interest in, or provide appropriate opportunities for, a person's cognitive and emotional development or need for social interaction;
- Use of unreasonable disciplinary measure or restraint;
- Disrespect for differences based on social class, gender, race, culture, disability, religion, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveler Community;
- Threats of isolation or withdrawal of services or supported networks.

c) Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a service user is unable or does not give consent to sexual activity and is being "used" by another adult for his/her gratification or sexual arousal. Examples of sexual abuse include:

- Intentional touching, fondling or molesting
- Inappropriate and sexually explicit conversations, remarks, text messages and emails
- Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the service user
- Exposure to pornography or other sexually explicit and inappropriate material
- Sexual exploitation of a service user, including any behaviours, gestures or expressions that may be interpreted as being seductive or sexually demeaning

- Sexual activity between an employee/volunteer and a service user who may have diminished capacity to give consent or where the service user was compelled to consent.

d) Financial or Material Abuse

This is unauthorized and improper use of funds, property or any other resources belonging to a service user. It may involve theft or conversion of money, objects or property belonging to a person. It is accomplished by withholding, using force or through misrepresentation and the denial of access to personal monies, whether within the family or in residential care and also including exploitation, pressures in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions.

e) Discriminatory abuse

This includes racism, ethnicism, sexism and ageism which may be based on disability or other form of harassment.

f) Institutional Abuse

Institutional abuse occurs when practices or systems are employed by or within the organization which deny service users their rights of choice, privacy and independence, and when employees/volunteers become desensitized and accept as reasonable, practices which their personal principles would lead them to question outside the organization.

7. Capacity and Consent

Where concerns exist about adult protection due regard must be given to an adult's mental capacity to make decisions or to consent as to what is happening to them. An adult may have the capacity to make these decisions or they may have diminished capacity for example, through dementia or a learning disability. In such situations, they may be less able to protect themselves, or to avoid risk situations or to understand what is happening to them.

RDIS believes it has a duty of care to report abuse and therefore requires its employees/volunteers to report such concerns in line with this procedure. In situations where the service user has the capacity to understand what is happening to them and informs a staff member/volunteer about abuse/neglect, the staff member while respecting the service users' rights, must not agree to confidentiality and must inform the service user that they will be

bringing this information to the attention of their Director of Department and following RDIS procedure as outlined in this policy.

RDIS acknowledges that service users, who are vulnerable, may experience barriers when it comes to reporting or disclosing abuse or neglect. Service users may be either unwilling to report abuse or co-operate with investigations due to a number of issues such as:

- A lack of capacity to report
- A fear of the abuser
- A lack of awareness of help available or how to access such help
- A lack of awareness that what they are experiencing is abuse or neglect

This can raise some ethical issues for staff/volunteers in respecting the service users' right to self determination and staff/volunteers exercising their duty of care to protect a person from abuse or neglect and report incidents of abuse. It may be necessary for staff/volunteers to override the wishes of the service user in order to prevent serious harm for example in cases of serious physical or sexual assault.

However, the final decision whether to report the concern outside of the organization must be made with the service user in all cases. If the service user refuses to report to the outside authorities every effort must be made to support this person and work with them to empower them to make the right decision to rectify any abuse they may be experiencing.

8. RDIS Adult Protection Reporting Procedure

The primary responsibility of the person who first suspects or is told of abuse is to ensure the safety of the person. The service user's welfare and safety must be the employee/volunteer's overriding and paramount concern.

It is not the responsibility of the employee/volunteer to prove the allegation. All concerns/suspicions should be reported using RDIS Adult Protection Structure and Reporting Procedure as outlined below any employee/volunteer who is concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a service user or receives an allegation of abuse should record their concerns/information and report the matter as soon as possible to their Director of Department. If for any reason the employee/volunteer does not wish to contact the Director of Department they must report their concern to the Executive Secretary.

The following procedure should be followed when dealing with any suspicion/allegation of abuse of an adult service user:

- All information relating to a concern or allegation of adult abuse must be treated in the strictest confidence,
- Where an employee/volunteer has reason to be concerned about the safety or welfare of any adult service user that they come in contact with in the course of their work, they must report it to their Director of Department. If the Director of Department cannot be contacted the Executive Secretary must be contacted,
- The adult service user that is at the centre of the concern must be kept informed and be involved at all stages of the decision making process. This is very important as they are an adult and need to be consulted at every stage,
- If the adult service user is likely to be at risk of serious or immediate harm or has just experienced significant harm, the Director of Department should be informed immediately that this has been discovered,
- The incident(s) which raised the concern must be documented accurately by the employee/volunteer as soon as possible after it occurs,
- Only factual details should be recorded, an employee/volunteer's feelings should not be part of this record. The employee should store the record in a private secure place until it is handed over to the Director of Department/ Executive Secretary,
- The Director of Department/Executive Secretary will discuss the report and make a decision with the consent of the adult on whether the identified concern is reported on to the concerned authority,
- The Employee/Volunteer will be informed of the decisions of the Director of Department/Executive Secretary,
- If the employee/volunteer is dissatisfied with a decision not to refer to the HSE, they may contact the HSE directly themselves, but must notify the Executive Secretary of their actions,
- Consideration will also be given to the adult service users' next of kin being notified. The Director of Department/Executive Secretary will provide direction on how this will be done as particular care should be taken especially if this will cause increased risk for the adult

service user. Consideration will also be given to the wishes of the adult service user and their capacity to consent.

9. Managing allegation made against member of staff or volunteer

RDIS will ensure that any allegations made against members or member of staff will be dealt with swiftly. Where a member of staff/volunteer is thought to have committed a criminal offence the police will be informed. If a crime has been witnessed the police should be contacted immediately.

The safety of the individual(s) concerned is paramount. A risk assessment must be undertaken immediately to assess the level of risk to all service users posed by the alleged perpetrator. This will include whether it is safe for them to continue in their role or any other role within the service whilst the investigation is undertaken.

The Designated Named Person will liaise with Adult Social Care Direct to discuss the best course of action and to ensure that the Rural Development Inter- Diocesan Service 's disciplinary procedures are coordinated with any other enquiries taking place as part of the ongoing management of the allegation. Rural Development Inter- Diocesan Service has a whistle blowing policy and staff is aware of this policy. Staff will be supported to use this policy.

10. Recording and managing confidential information

Rural Development Inter- Diocesan Service is committed to maintaining confidentiality wherever possible and information around Safeguarding Adults issues should be shared only with those who need to know. All allegations/concerns should be recorded in a file where and the information should be factual and not based on opinions, record what the person tells you, what you have seen and witnesses if appropriate. The information that is recorded will be kept secure and will comply with data protection.

11. Disseminating/Reviewing policy and procedures

This Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedure will be clearly communicated to staff, trustees, volunteers, service users, parents and careers. The Designated Named Person will be responsible for ensuring that this is done.

The Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures will be reviewed annually by RDIS Board of Directors/ Management Committee. The Designated Named Person for Safeguarding Adults will

be involved in this process and can recommend any changes. The Designated Named Person will also ensure that any changes are clearly communicated to staff, trustees and volunteers. It may be appropriate to involve service users in the review and service users and parents/carers need to be informed of any significant changes.

12. Protection to Persons Reporting Abuse

An employee/volunteer is protected from a claim of defamation in reporting their concerns provided they comply with the procedure outlined within this policy. RDIS is also committed to ensuring that employees and volunteers will be protected and supported in raising adult protection concerns

13. Confidentiality and Record Keeping

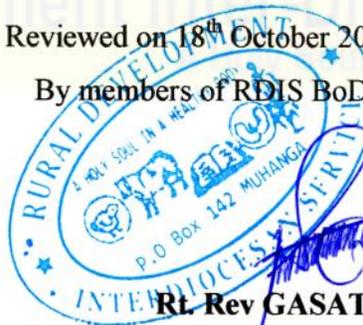
It is essential that all information within RDIS and the information exchanged between the victim and the organization staff is treated with the utmost confidentiality in order to safeguard the privacy of the service users and families concerned and to avoid prejudicing any subsequent legal proceedings Information should only be shared with individuals who need to know and are involved in the reporting procedure for dealing with suspicions or allegations of abuse.



Mr. Viateur NTARINDWA
Secretary of the BoD

Reviewed on 18th October 2020

By members of RDIS BoD



RL Rev GASATURA KAMUSIIME NATHAN
The Chair and President of BoD