

POLICY NAME: Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

APPROVED BY: CPAC

POLICY OWNER: Co-Directors, HR

CATEGORY: Human Resources

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NEXT REVIEW: April 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

In keeping with the mission of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), all World Renew staff members are expected to uphold their commitment to professional ethics and Christian values in all their relationships and assigned responsibilities. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to participate in Christ's ministry of good news, healing and hope, peace and justice. We are called to bear witness to Christ's healing love in the face of violence, including sexual abuse. World Renew expects its staff to treat all people with respect, love, and honor in recognition of the dignity that comes from being created in the image of the Triune God.

World Renew is committed to promoting the security, dignity and wellbeing of beneficiaries, volunteers and staff. In particular we are committed to the safety, security and dignity of adults who are vulnerable and/or at risk.

Adults who are vulnerable and/or at risk are defined¹ in this policy as being any person aged 18 or over who, additionally, either:

- a. has particular care, support or special needs and as a result abuse can occur when they are mistreated, neglected or harmed by another person who holds a position of trust; or
- b. where the adult is dependent/reliant on others for the provision of basic services because of their context (e.g. in a refugee camp or as a recipient of relief supplies or in an unfamiliar country/location) and are potentially vulnerable to exploitation or abuse as a result of their status or lack of power/control; or
- c. The adult is in a relationship (social or work), or in contact with, another adult who seeks to misuse their position of authority or trust to control, coerce, manipulate or dominate them.

This policy complements, but does not replace, the World Renew Code of Conduct, the Code of Conduct Policy, and the World Renew Complaints Policy.

¹ Adapted from the definition of adults who are vulnerable and/or at risk used by Tearfund and found on their website (https://www.tearfund.org/en/about_us/reporting_concerns/)

2. SCOPE

This policy² applies to any work implemented or funded by World Renew, all World Renew staff and volunteers³, and World Renew partners and partner staff.

3. PURPOSE

The policy applies to all people who work in and through World Renew and its partners as they have unique access to adults who are vulnerable/at risk. World Renew recognises that all people, regardless of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, age, religious or political beliefs, family background, economic status, legal status, ability, physical or mental health or criminal background, have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or abuse and is committed to safeguarding the welfare of vulnerable adults that we work with. This policy seeks to reduce risks to vulnerable adults who are participants in World Renew supported programmes and to ensure that acts of abuse are identified and dealt with if they occur.

4. PRINCIPLES

This policy is based on the following principles:

- The welfare of vulnerable adults is of primary concern;
- All vulnerable adults, whatever their gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, age, religious or political beliefs, family background, economic status, legal status, ability, physical or mental health or criminal background, or any other legally protected category, have the right to safeguarding from abuse;
- It is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns about abuse to the designated Safeguarding and Complaints Focal Point, and the responsibility of the relevant local or national agencies (e.g. police or social services department) to conduct, where appropriate, a joint investigation;
- All incidents of alleged poor practice, misconduct and abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

Those people in positions of responsibility within the organisation (ie all employees in a supervisory level or above) will work in accordance with the interests of vulnerable adults and promote the effective implementation of the policy outlined below.

² Some elements of this policy have been adapted from the Learn with Unite Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy found on their website (<https://learnwithunite.org/vle/file.php/1/policies/Safeguarding%20Policy.html>)

³ See Key terms and definitions in section 7

5. POLICY

Safeguarding is a term used for the set of internal facing, operational policies, procedures

and practice that we employ to ensure that our organisation itself is a safe organisation. Best practice is that safeguarding duties extend to whole organisation policies, values and ethos, and include all staff.

World Renew Staff must ensure that their behaviour promotes a safe environment and allows vulnerable adults/adults at risk to live free from:

- Harm and Abuse - including physical, sexual (including sexual harassment) and emotional (including the abuse of power/trust and any form of coercion)
- Physical & sexual exploitation
- Neglect
- Discrimination
- Human Trafficking

5.1 Immediate action to ensure safety

Immediate action may be necessary at any stage in involvement with vulnerable adults. In all cases it is vital to take appropriate action based on context in order to safeguard the adult or adults concerned.

5.2 Recognition of abuse or neglect

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of an adult. Somebody may abuse or neglect an adult by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Vulnerable adults may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults.

A vulnerable adult can be put at risk of harm through a variety of actions, inadequate policies, procedures and failures to act. Abuse can take the form of, though it is not limited to, the following:

- Physical Abuse*: Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a vulnerable adult.
- Psychological Abuse*: Included in this are emotional abuse, threats, deprivation of contact, humiliation, intimidation, coercion, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal of services.
- Sexual Abuse*: This covers actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual

nature, including inappropriate touching, by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. (United Nations Secretary General's Bulletin 2003/13, 9 October 2003; Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse).

- iv. *Sexual exploitation*: This is defined as any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another (United Nations Secretary General Bulletin, 9 October 2003). In these situations, the potential victim believes she/he has no other choice than to comply; this is not consent and it is exploitation.
- v. *Financial and Material Abuse*: This covers exploitation and pressure in connection to wills, property, inheritance, financial transactions or withholding material goods.
- vi. *Neglect or acts of omissions*: Included in this are ignoring medical or physical care needs, withholding of medication or adequate nutrition and failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services.
- vii. *Discriminatory Abuse*: Discrimination can be in the form of racist, sexist, ableist, ageist, classist, or other forms of harassment.

World Renew Staff need to be alert to the potential abuse of vulnerable adults in any situation, including abuse by World Renew staff.

World Renew staff should know how to recognise and act upon indicators of abuse or potential abuse involving vulnerable adults and where there are concerns about a vulnerable adult's welfare. There is an expected responsibility for all staff to respond to any suspected or actual abuse of a Vulnerable Adult in accordance with these procedures.

5.3 What to do if vulnerable adults talk to you about abuse or neglect

It is recognised that a vulnerable adult may seek you out to share information about abuse or neglect, or talk spontaneously as an individual or in groups when you are present⁴. In these situations you should:

- Listen carefully to the vulnerable adult.
- Allow the vulnerable adult to give a spontaneous account; do not stop a vulnerable adult who is freely recalling significant events, unless they become extremely upset and agitated, in which case offer them a break and let them continue later.
- Make an accurate record of the information you have been given taking care to record the timing, setting and people present, the vulnerable adult's

⁴ In the context of some specific programmes implemented by World Renew, such as Trauma Healing Programmes, there may be alternative procedures established for handling reports of abuse or neglect that is not related to the behaviour of World Renew Staff or volunteers. In such cases, the alternative procedures should be followed.

presentation as well as what was said. Do not throw this away as it may later be needed as evidence.

- Use the vulnerable adult's own words where possible.
- Explain that you cannot promise not to speak to others about the information they have shared - do not offer false confidentiality.
- Reassure the vulnerable adult that:
 - they have done the right thing in telling you;
 - they have not done anything wrong;
 - Tell the vulnerable adult what you are going to do next and explain that you will need to get help to keep him/her safe.
- Do not insist the vulnerable adult repeats his or her account of events to anyone, unless as part of an investigation.

5.4 Reporting concerns

If you have a vulnerable adult safeguarding concern you should:

i) *Report your Concern*⁵

Because of your observations of, or information received, you may become concerned about a vulnerable adult who has not spoken to you. It is good practice to ask a vulnerable adult why they are upset or how a cut or bruise was caused, or respond to a vulnerable adult wanting to talk to you. This practice can help clarify vague concerns and result in appropriate action.

If you are concerned about a vulnerable adult you must report your concerns⁶ to your nearest Safeguarding and Complaints Focal Point. If you are unsure who this is, concerns can also be reported to the World Renew Safeguarding and Complaints Coordinator using the following contact details:

Email: complaints@worldrenew.net

World Renew safeguarding and complaints focal points will know the correct procedures to follow and have relevant local contacts for referral if needed.

ii) *Make a complaint*

If you have information which suggests a World Renew staff or volunteer has:

⁵ Please refer to the World Renew Complaints Policy and Complaints Handling and Investigations Guidelines for further details about the process of how a concern or a complaint is handled within World Renew.

⁶ In some cases, your concern may be related to a cultural practice that normalises abusive behaviours (for example chaining people with disabilities to their beds). These concerns should be reported and the Safeguarding and Complaints Focal Point will then be in a position to either refer this information to a relevant organisation or use the information to inform World Renew Protection Programming.

- behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a vulnerable adult
- possibly committed a criminal or unlawful offence against, or related to, a vulnerable adult
- behaved towards a vulnerable adult in a way that indicated s/he is unsuitable to work with vulnerable adults

you must submit a complaint to the World Renew Safeguarding and Complaints Coordinator (complaints@worldrenew.net), following the World Renew Complaints Policy procedures, as the staff member is in breach of the World Renew Code of Conduct and the World Renew Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy.

The World Renew safeguarding and complaints coordinator will then follow the procedures outlined in the World Renew Complaints Policy and Guidelines and conduct an investigation if necessary. If a staff member or other person associated with World Renew is alleged to have abused or exploited a vulnerable adult, they will be suspended from their post, with pay, or assigned modified duties until the investigation is concluded. If a staff member or other person associated with World Renew is found to have abused or exploited a vulnerable adult, or otherwise violated this policy, they will be disciplined, up to and including dismissal from their post.

5.5 Confidentiality

World Renew staff should ensure that any records made in relation to a reported concern, complaint or referral should be kept confidentially and in a secure place.

Information in relation to vulnerable adult protection concerns should be shared on a “need to know” basis. However, the sharing of information is vital to vulnerable adult protection and, therefore, the issue of confidentiality is secondary to a vulnerable adult’s need for protection.

5.6 Working with partners

Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding policy requirements are included in partnership agreements or contracts with World Renew partners, contractors, vendors, and consultants.

6. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every three years and revised to incorporate any lessons learned during the implementation of the policy.

7. KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS⁷

Abuse: Where the term “abuse” is used in this policy it should be understood to include sexual, physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Complaint: A complaint is a specific grievance of anyone who has been negatively affected by the work of World Renew or their partner, or who considers that World Renew has not fulfilled a stated commitment or is in breach of a World Renew Policy. This includes staff behaviour in relation to the World Renew Codes of Conduct. World Renew will handle complaints in a fair, appropriate and prompt manner. A complaint necessitates a response.

Concern: A “concern” is when there is an issue related to the safeguarding of a vulnerable adult which is not as a result of the behaviour of World Renew staff or partner staff behaviour, and therefore does not result in a ‘complaint’ against that staff. Instead, a concern must be reported so that appropriate referral or action can be taken in the best interests of the vulnerable adult.

Contact with vulnerable adults: Any interaction with or proximity to adults who are vulnerable/at risk. This includes both intentional and incidental contact.

Safeguarding: safeguarding is the set of internal facing, operational policies, procedures

and practice that we employ to ensure that our organisation itself is a safe organisation. This means we ensure that:

4. Anyone who represents our organisation behaves appropriately towards vulnerable adults and never abuses the position of trust that comes with being a World Renew staff or volunteer.
5. Everyone associated with the organisation is aware of and responds appropriately to issues of abuse or exploitation (sexual or otherwise) of vulnerable adults.

Partner: an organisation that World Renew enters into Partnership agreements with to collaborate on a mutually agreed action.

Vulnerable adults: any person aged 18 or over who, additionally, either:

- a. has particular care, support or special needs and as a result abuse can occur when they are mistreated, neglected or harmed by another person who holds a position of trust or
- b. the adult is dependent/reliant on others for the provision of basic services

⁷ World Renew commits to complying with its applicable statutory and legislative obligations. Accordingly, the specific definitions, terms or concepts used in this policy are for reference purposes only. If necessary, the applicable provincial or federal definitions mandated by the appropriate jurisdiction where an employee is employed, will take precedence and/or will supersede the definitions outlined in this policy.

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- because of their context (eg in a refugee camp or as a recipient of relief supplies or in an unfamiliar country/location) and are potentially vulnerable to exploitation or abuse as a result of their status or lack of power/control or
- c. the adult is in a relationship (social or work), or in contact with, another adult who seeks to misuse their position of authority or trust to control, coerce, manipulate or dominate them.

World Renew Staff: Refers to all World Renew staff, volunteers, consultants, exposure visit participants, contractors and fieldworkers.