

# Caritas Macau

## Policy on the Protection of Children and the Disadvantaged

### 1. Object

This policy statement is formulated with the aim to ensure that the safety of all service targets in Caritas Macau, especially children and the disadvantaged, are protected against any forms of harm or abuse. When there is suspected harm or abuse caused to service user or working staff, the agency will be able to handle the case according to the procedures and measures stipulated under this policy statement.

### 2. Definition of Harm and Abuse

- 2.1 Physical violence: is that the perpetrator or abuser has caused others physical injury or physical suffering where there is a definite knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that the injury has been inflicted non-accidentally.
- 2.2 Sexual abuse: is the involvement of a child who is aged under 18 in sexual activity, or seducing, forcing or intending to force others who are aged 18 or above to engage in sexual activity. Forms of abuse include direct sexual abuse (such as touching the sexual organ of the child or service user, conducting sexual intercourse, etc.) or indirect sexual abuse (such as forcing the child or service user to pornography exposure, producing child pornography, etc.).
- 2.3 Verbal abuse or intimidation: is that anyone has spoken to others by using demeaning, insulting, threatening or offensive language intentionally, which has led to the recipients' feelings of petrified, insulted or offended.
- 2.4 Infliction of mental distress: is the repeated pattern of behaviour and attitude or extreme incident that endangers or impairs the emotional or intelligence development of the child service user. Such acts damage immediately or ultimately the behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning of the child or service user.
- 2.5 Inappropriate care: is the severe or repeated pattern of lacking of attention to the basic needs of the child and the disadvantaged, such as senior citizens and persons with disabilities, that endangers or impairs their health development or life security.
- 2.6 Since the forms of harm or abuse vary, it is difficult to conclude into a comprehensive definition. If a staff in Caritas Macau comes across any problems related to the above, he/she may consult the head of the service unit, the Deputy Service Director, the Service Director or the Secretary General for seeking formal advice from the legal profession.

### 3. Guiding Philosophy

Our guiding policy is “Zero Tolerance Against Abuse of Children and the Disadvantaged”.

Being a Catholic social service organisation, Caritas Macau serves “the least brothers and sisters” with the spirit of God’s love. Children, the elderly and persons with disabilities are our particular concern. We are committed to build a community on the basis of truth, justice, love, liberty and peace around them. Hence, Caritas Macau would try our best to provide a safe

environment for service users, staff as well as visitors, and to prevent them from any forms of harm or abuse. We would also ensure our staff and service users to follow and execute this policy in order that they could be properly respected, treasured and protected.

#### **4. Policy Principles**

- 4.1 In any circumstances, Caritas Macau recognises that preventing service users free from harm or abuse is of paramount importance in the provision of services.
- 4.2 Caritas Macau is committed to ensure that all service users would be duly respected and free from verbal, physical, mental and sexual abuse. Materials of this protection policy, procedures, measures and reminders have to be posted in public areas for notification of service users, staff and visitors.
- 4.3 Caritas Macau has the duty to inform the staff of this protection policy and procedures, and ensure that they would execute accordingly after receiving any reported cases.
- 4.4 Caritas Macau is dedicated to provide a safe environment for service users, staff and visitors, and ensure that they would be protected against any forms of harm including verbal, physical, mental and sexual abuse. Opportunities would be given to service users to express their issues of concern.
- 4.5 Caritas Macau would handle and solve any incidents of harm or abuse related to service users or staff in a comprehensive, positive and prudent manner.
- 4.6 The information of incidents concerning this policy would be documented and filed. The records would be regularly reviewed to identify any potential risks.

#### **5. Procedures of Preventing and Handling Harm or Abuse**

##### **5.1 Environment and Facilities of Service Units**

Working staff should pay regular inspection toward the environment and facilities of the service units, and adopt effective prevention measures including locking the vacant rooms and installing lights in dark places, in order to maintain the environment and facilities safe and reduce any chance of harm or abuse occurred in the service units.

##### **5.2 Preventive Work**

5.2.1 To protect service users free from any forms of harm or abuse, the service units should announce in oral or written manner to let service users know of their responsibility, rights, as well as this protection policy and reporting procedures, so that they would seek help or lodge complaint if there is any harm or abuse during their receipt of service.

5.2.2 To ensure the staff clearly understand what have been stipulated for protection of service users in this respect, the service units are required to notify all staff of the procedures and methods in handling relevant complaints and do the same when there are any changes.

5.2.3 When recruiting new staff, Caritas Macau should include in the advertisement specifying that “Our organization requires the staff having an attitude to love, respect and treasure the service users and making them properly protected”. Short presentation on this topic should be arranged in the orientation program for new staff to equip them with basic

knowledge. The guiding policy of “Zero Tolerance Against Abuse of Children and the Disadvantaged” should also be specified in the staff manual.

5.2.4 Caritas Macau and the service units should train up the staff by means of supervision, meeting, interview or workshop in order to improve their understanding of this policy, raise their awareness toward incidents of harm or abuse, as well as enhance their knowledge of verbal, physical, mental and sexual abuse, and know how to protect the rights of service users.

5.2.5 The staff should observe the instructions given in this policy while providing services. The staff has the responsibility to remind service users and other disadvantaged groups of the preventive measures for getting free from harm or abuse and the rights they are entitled for, and encourage them to notify the service units for taking appropriate actions when encountering harm or abuse. The staff should also observe the procedures of handling general and emergency situations as specified in the staff manual.

## **6. Procedures of Handling Incidents of Suspected Harm or Abuse**

- 6.1 When a service user is suspected to be harmed or abused, the staff should make reference to the “Guideline on Procedures of Handling Family Violence Cases” of Social Welfare Bureau of Macau Government and report to the authority.
- 6.2 If a service user is suspected to be harmed or abused by one of our staff members, the service unit should immediately stop the involved staff from serving the service user and replace with another staff for providing service. Investigation of the incident would be handled by the head of the service unit in accordance with the “Procedures of Handling Complaints” and an initial report should be submitted within a reasonable period of time. Where necessary, the Deputy Service Director, the Service Director or the Secretary General would make further investigation and follow-up. If the incident is proved, Caritas Macau would take disciplinary actions against the involved staff. Should the harm or abuse be serious enough, Caritas Macau might dismiss the involved staff or hand the involved staff up to the police.
- 6.3 If a service user is suspected to be harmed or abused by another service user, the staff should immediately interfere and make investigation over the incident. The staff should consult the head of the service unit and submit the report within a reasonable period of time. The incident should be reported to the Deputy Service Director, the Service Director and the Secretary General, as well as family member of the harmed or abused, and the service funder. Based on the opinions of all concerned parties, it would be able to decide whether or not to report the incident to the police for judicial follow-up. The entire process of investigation and subsequent actions should be conducted without delay in order to reduce further harm to both sides.
- 6.4 If one of our staff members is suspected to be harmed or abused by a service user, the head of the service unit after discussing with the concerned staff, might assign another staff to take up and serve the service user, or even stop the service. The incident would be investigated by the head of the service unit, the Deputy Service Director or the Service

Director. Should the harm or abuse be serious enough, Caritas Macau might report it to the police for follow-up. A report of the incident should be submitted to the Management within a reasonable period of time.

- 6.5 To ensure the privacy of the harmed or abused to be protected, all the handling methods or procedures should be conducted under the principle of confidentiality. The disclosure of all information, such as reporting to the police, should have the consent of the harmed or abused, or his/her family member, except in special circumstances say personal safety, court call etc. During the process of handling the incident, the harmed or abused has the right to request for adequate counseling. Meanwhile, the staff should carefully assess the mood of the harmed or abused, and initiate help of counseling or service referral.

## **7. Review and Amendment**

Caritas Macau would review the content and the implementation of this policy and related measures at least every three years. Timely evaluation and amendment would be made with the approval of the Secretary General. The updated policy statement would be announced to all the staff. The current staff members or those newly recruited are requested to read and provide service in accordance with this policy.

*This is an English-translated version. Should there be any doubts, please make reference to the Chinese copy of origin.*