



PROCEDURE FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Adopted by Georges River Life Care Board on 10th July 2020

PURPOSE

The Procedure for Conflict Resolution (the **Procedure**) sets out a procedure for resolving conflict between two or more staff, volunteers of Life Care in a pastoral and restorative manner, rather than through a formal complaint handling procedure.

It is important to identify that some issues cannot be resolved in this manner, and this Procedure is **not** designed to:

- resolve issues relating to domestic violence, family law matters before the Family Law Court (or similar body),
- resolve complaints or concerns relating to abuse (including Child Sexual Abuse or Sexual Misconduct involving a Child) or other serious breaches of the Code of Conduct that are to be resolved in accordance with the *Complaint Handling Procedure*; or

SCOPE

The Procedure applies to all staff, volunteers, attendee of GRLC.

An attendee is a person who regularly attends (at least once a month) a program of GRLC.

THIS PROCEDURE SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE *SAFE CHURCH POLICY* AND:

- *Staff and Volunteers Code of Conduct*
- *Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff or Volunteers*
- *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*

When does this procedure apply?

Situations to which this policy applies include the following:

- a) a disagreement between two or more staff, volunteers, members or attenders of GRLC;
- b) a perceived offence caused by a staff member, volunteer, member or attendee to another;
- c) a perception by one person that they have been bullied by a staff member, volunteer, member or attendee (and that it is a matter that is able to be resolved in a pastoral manner);
- d) dissatisfaction with the manner in which a staff member or volunteer has fulfilled their role; and
- e) a complaint that a staff member or volunteer has committed a minor breach of the Code of Conduct.

Raising an issue

- a) Anyone may raise an issue
 - with a person directly (see Pathway 1).
 - with CEO or the Life Care Board in order to seek assistance in resolving the issue (see Pathway 1, Pathway 2 and Pathway 3).
- b) If the concern relates to the CEO or a member of the Board, the person should raise their concern with another member of the staff or Board.

Key Principles

- a) In raising an issue, all parties are to be guided by the following key principles:
 - Seeking to glorify God in our responses to each other.
 - Striving to serve each other even in the midst of our disunity.
 - Seeking to be Christ-like in our reactions to each other.
 - Extending grace to each other.
 - Focusing on forgiveness and restoration of relationships where appropriate.
 - Seeking help where needed, to address grievances.
- a) GR LIFE CARE acknowledges that:
 - the nature of relationship breakdown means that it is necessary to respond sensitively and with care for all parties involved;
 - in many conflict situations, to help each party understand the key issues and ways forward, the assistance of a neutral third party becomes essential;
 - many issues are specific to a particular context and relationship and so must be responsive to this, seeking resolution of substantive issues and where possible, appropriate restoration of relationships between all parties;
 - the pathway recommended by Management will depend upon the nature of the issue, the positions or roles of the parties involved and the skills and capacity of Management to address the situation.

Pathway 1 – Personal Approach

- a) Where an issue arises between a staff member, volunteer, member or attendee and another and the parties feel able to address their concerns without involving other parties, they are to go to the other person and express their concerns with a view to resolving their differences in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17.
- b) The person initiating the personal approach should consider seeking counsel from a wise and unbiased Key leader (from within GR LIFE CARE or externally) or receiving conflict coaching before approaching the other person.
- c) This approach may be useful for addressing personal disagreements and perceived offences. This pathway will not be appropriate where there are concerns about significant power imbalances.

Pathway 2 – Locally-assisted Approach

- a) In the event of any of the following then the matter should be brought to the attention of the Board.
 - Pathway 1 being unsuccessful in restoring relationship; and/or
 - the issue relates to perceived bullying; and/or
 - the issue relates to dissatisfaction with the manner in which a staff member or volunteer has performed their role.
- b) If an issue is brought to the Board
 - The Board and/or Management are to provide support to all parties.
 - Where the Board considers the issue to be sufficiently serious, they are to appoint a suitably skilled person to assist in resolving the conflict. This may be a senior member of the Management. The Board are to avoid conflicts of interest where possible when selecting this person. .
- c) Where all parties involved in the matter are willing to work towards restoring relationships, the person selected to assist in resolving the conflict will:
 - value confidentiality at all times;
 - meet with each person separately to ensure they are given a chance to tell their story in private, working through their underlying concerns in moving towards resolution;
 - clearly communicate the process to be used to each party during resolution meetings;
 - hold a meeting with the parties together to identify common ground, work through the issues and determine the course of action;
 - follow up to ensure that the solutions are being implemented; and
 - if appropriate, monitor the situation over the following weeks, including to check-in with the parties to ensure that the situation is resolving and that relationships are being restored.
- d) At any stage throughout the process, the person selected to assist resolve the issue may contact Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT for assistance or resourcing.

Escalation to Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff or Volunteers

During the course of resolving a concern in accordance with this Procedure, it may be necessary to escalate the matter in accordance with the *Procedure for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers*. There may be several reasons this is required, including:

- that on inquiry into the issue it is identified that the conduct complained of would more appropriately be characterised as a serious breach of the *Code of Conduct* (such as child protection concerns; or
- the subject of the concern is a staff member or volunteer and they are not willing to participate in this Procedure (as required under the *Code of Conduct*).