

## Code of Conduct

Policy Area	Human Resources
Policy Owner	EMBGS
Date Reviewed	21 July 2021
Next Review	21 July 2024

### Purpose and Scope

Ethical conduct requires employees, volunteers, students, and contractors of Womens Health & Family Services (WHFS) to act and behave in ways that uphold the values of Respect, Integrity, Diversity & Inclusion, and Innovation to maintain public trust whilst providing a framework for staff to support day to day ethical decision making.

WHFS monitor the Code contents for relevance and accuracy every three years or as needed.

The Code of Conduct describes standards of professional conduct and behaviour that promotes adherence to WHFS’s values of Respect, Integrity, Diversity & Inclusion, and Innovation and outlines the required standard of acceptable conduct and behaviour that is expected of all employees, volunteers’ students, and contractors in the performance of their duties and interactions in the workplace.

All WHFS staff are expected to exercise sound judgement and live up to both the content and spirit of the Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct is not intended to provide a detailed and exhaustive list of what to do in every aspect of work. Instead, it represents a broad framework that will guide conduct and behaviour in the performance of duties and interactions in the workplace.

All paid and unpaid staff, including volunteers, interns or trainees of WHFS are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who engage with WHFS. All paid and unpaid staff are expected to act in accordance with this Code of Conduct in their physical and online interactions with children and young people under the age of 18 years

This policy applies to WHFS staff including employees, board members, students, volunteers, and anyone who represents WHFS.

### Policy Statement

WHFS vision is ‘Better future for all WA women’. To achieve this vision, we need a highly professional and inclusive workforce.

### Key Definitions

Code of Conduct	describes standards of professional conduct and behaviour that promotes adherence to WHFS’s values
Fraudulent activity	the physical theft of money or other property, deliberate falsification of statements or documents such as falsifying timesheets, concealment, and improper use of information, conflict of interest and destruction or use of falsified documentation.
National Principles for Child Safe Organisations	The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations were developed by the National Children’s Commissioner and reflect the ten child safe standards recommended by the Royal Commission, with a broader scope that goes

beyond sexual abuse to cover other forms of potential harm. [National Principles for child safe organisations](#)

## Use of Information

Confidential information is information obtained or developed during the conduct of WHFS's business and which if disclosed will or could lead to risk, damage or injury to the organisation, its staff, clients or third parties.

All staff must:

- Protect confidential information.
- Only access confidential information when it is required for work purposes.
- Not use confidential information for any unofficial or non-work purposes.
- Only release confidential information if authorised to do so.

Staff are only permitted to release confidential information in accordance with established policies and procedures. As a guideline, staff shall not give information unless:

- Required to do so by law
- WHFS Duty of Care
- Appropriate authority has been granted to release the information
- The information is officially available to the public and is released in accordance with WHFS procedures.

## Confidentiality

As a general obligation, staff must not disclose or use anything which could be considered intellectual property, other property, or confidential information belonging to WHFS without prior permission from the organisation or as required by law. It is unacceptable for staff to make unauthorised use or disclosure of information to which they have had access.

Depending on the circumstances of the case, the unauthorised disclosure of information may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal.

## Conflict of Interest

The Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with the Conflict of Interest Policy and applies to all staff. In addition, the Code of Conduct considers appropriateness of certain personal relationships.

Under no circumstances are staff permitted to develop personal relationships with clients, including after-hours and through the use of digital and social media. This includes where the personal relationship develops within a two-year period once the client is no longer accessing WHFS services.

A personal relationship is an association between two or more people that may be based on any regular business or social interactions and/or commitments. Personal relationships may include a relationship between two parties that can have the unintentional effect of influencing judgment or behaviour or creating a perception of influencing judgment.

Where a staff has a pre-existing relationship with a client, this may lead to a conflict of interest and they must disclose this to their reporting manager or executive manager and the Conflict of Interest

Policy must be followed. A plan should be put in place and approved by the reporting manager to mitigate any potential conflict of interest. The relationship must not directly or indirectly compromise the performance of their duties or conflict with WHFS's interests at any point in time.

Furthermore, where a staff is involved in a decision relating to the selection, appointment or promotion of a person with whom they share a personal relationship, for example a family member, it must be immediately declared in writing to the Executive/CEO prior to the decision being made. WHFS treats any conflict of interest in this regard extremely seriously and any instance of nondisclosure may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

### **Use of WHFS Resources**

WHFS equipment, funds, facilities and other resources are to be used:

- effectively, economically and carefully; and
- for the benefit of the organisation.

Minimal use of telephones, computers, faxes or similar equipment for private purposes is acceptable.

Misuse of WHFS resources may constitute fraud and a breach of the Code.

### **Public Comments**

#### **Individual Comment**

Generally, all staff have the same rights of free speech and independence in the conduct of their private affairs as other members of the public. However, they also have a duty not to compromise WHFS by publicly criticising (including via social media) the organisation, its business activities or its staff.

#### **Official Public Comment to the Media**

WHFS has nominated spokespersons who are authorised to communicate with the media. Unless specifically authorised, you should not communicate to the media any information concerning WHFS or its business activities. If you receive a media inquiry you should refer the journalist to the Marketing/Public Relation team member, who will then work with the journalist to answer their inquiry.

#### **Political Neutrality**

WHFS is a non-political organisation and is not to be aligned with a particular political party within Australia. You may engage in political activity at your own discretion and in a personal capacity.

#### **External Communications**

All reports prepared by WHFS staff are for the use of WHFS exclusively and remain the property of WHFS. Therefore, whenever you prepare correspondence about a WHFS programme or project, WHFS retains ownership of the publication.

Access for the use of all WHFS publications must be made in writing to the CEO or relevant Executive.

Prior to the publishing of any report/paper, it must first be approved for publication by the CEO or relevant Executive. A copy of the approved publication will be retained by WHFS.

## **Plagiarism**

Staff shall only take credit for their own original work. When using other resources, staff must use proper citations to give credit.

## **E-mail /Internet/Telephone Calls/Social Media**

WHFS considers the content of any e-mail to be its property and reserves the right to access staff accounts. You must not download material that is inappropriate at any time for any purpose.

Inappropriate use will include the use of the internet or email to access or distribute material which would be regarded as being offensive or constituting the use of these for menace or harassment. As a rule, private e-mails/internet/social media usage and private telephone calls should be restricted and excessive use or abuse may lead to disciplinary action.

Copyright law is to be observed at all times in copying or distributing any material.

## **Acceptance of gifts and benefits**

It is unethical for staff to solicit any gifts, benefits or additional money for themselves or other WHFS staff. Under no circumstances are staff to accept gifts or benefits, or any inducement which might in any way obligate, compromise or influence WHFS or that person in their official capacity.

## **Outside/Secondary Employment**

WHFS recognises that you may wish to engage in other employment or activities for which remuneration may or may not be received, as a result of necessity, interests or further personal or professional development. WHFS also recognises the benefits that can result from the development of your skills through outside employment.

However, you are required to fulfil your contractual obligations to WHFS in terms of your availability to undertake work required by WHFS.

Before engaging in work that could potentially raise a conflict of interest, employees must seek written permission from an Executive Manager. Approval will not be granted where the secondary employment involves or could involve a conflict of interest with WHFS related duties or could reasonably be perceived by a member of the public to give rise to a conflict of interest.

Executives are not permitted to engage in any secondary employment and must seek written approval from the CEO or Chairperson of the Board before accepting any Directorships.

## **Whistleblower**

Employees are expected to cooperate with the organisation in maintaining proper, and ethical operations, if necessary, by reporting non-compliant actions by other people. Correspondingly, employees who do assist in maintaining proper, and ethical operations should not be penalised in any way, provided their actions are made in good faith, based on reasonable grounds, and conform to procedure.

Any investigation shall observe the rules of natural justice and the provisions of procedural fairness.

Disclosures may be made anonymously, and this anonymity shall as far as possible be preserved by the organisation.

Where an employee of WHFS believes in good faith on reasonable grounds that any other employee, volunteer, or contractor has breached general law, organisational policy, or generally recognised principles of ethics, and wishes to report their concern, that employee must report their concern to

- Human Resources and their Executive Manager or if they feel that their Executive Manager may be complicit in the breach,
- the CEO or, if they feel that the CEO may be complicit in the breach,
- a member of the WHFS Board, or if they feel that the Board may be complicit,
- the duly constituted legal authorities responsible for the enforcement of the law in the relevant area.

These procedures do not authorise any employee to inform commercial media or social media of their concern, and do not offer protection to any employee who does so, unless

- it is not feasible for employees to report internally, or
- existing reporting channels have failed to deal with issues effectively.

## **Fraud Prevention**

WHFS always requires all employees to act honestly and with integrity and to safeguard the resources for which they are responsible. Any fraud or corruption committed against WHFS is a major concern to the organisation. Accordingly, corrupt conduct will be thoroughly investigated, and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken (including referral to the Police).

Fraudulent activity may include the physical theft of money or other property, deliberate falsification of statements or documents such as falsifying timesheets, concealment, and improper use of information, conflict of interest and destruction or use of falsified documentation.

Any necessary legal action to recover losses resulting from fraudulent or corrupt conduct will be undertaken provided that the benefits of such recovery exceed the funds and resources invested in the recovery action.

The Board, the CEO and Management are responsible for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption and for the implementation and operation of controls that minimise fraudulent and corrupt activity within their service areas.

The CEO and Executives may be called upon to perform preliminary enquiries regarding any complaints of fraudulent and/or corrupt activity.

Fundamental internal controls to prevent and detect fraud include:

- All transactions to be approved by an appropriate responsible person.
- Dollar value limits for the Board and the CEO for transactions are specified in the Financial Management Operational Expenditure Governance document of WHFS.
- Managers to scrutinize documents before approving them.
- Managers to implement suitable recruitment procedures.
- Managers to complete exit procedures for employees leaving to ensure return of assets.

- Physical security and custody of portable or exchangeable assets is limited to authorised employees.
- Access control of buildings.
- Information security via passwords on email and internet facilities.
- Regular review of management reports, reconciliations, budget control and reporting lines.
- Identification and declaration of conflict of interest or stated interests.

### **Responsibilities after leaving WHFS**

Staff must not disclose any official information after leaving WHFS that was non-disclosable during their engagement. Former staff must not use or take advantage of, personal, confidential, or official information that they have obtained during their employment.

Furthermore, all staff must be careful in their dealings with former staff and ensure they do not give them favourable treatment or access to personal, confidential, or official WHFS information.

Furthermore, staff must not use their position to advance their prospects for future employment or allow their work to be influenced by plans for, or offers of, external employment which would conflict or compromise in any way the best interests of WHFS.

### **Responsibilities**

All staff must:

- Treat all people, clients, colleagues, and members of other organisations impartially, politely and with courtesy, consideration, and sensitivity
- Act with integrity, utmost care and diligence
- Encourage staff to use their initiative, skills, and expertise appropriately and in accordance with WHFS vision, purpose, and values.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Always uphold the values and good reputation of the organisation whether on or off duty.
- Avoid conflicts of interest, report those that cannot be avoided and cooperate in their management.
- Only use official information for the work-related purpose it was intended.
- Only use their position and resources for a proper purpose
- Adhere to all published policies, procedures and guideline that underpin their work.
- Practice professional conduct in accordance with the codes of professional conduct published by relevant professional bodies. If there is any inconsistency, staff will act in accordance with this Code.
- Be responsible for maintaining their own skills, expertise, and capacity to perform their duties, including registered staff to notify any changes in registration or professional disciplinary matters.
- Strive to improve their own skills and expertise through supervision, training, and continuing self-development.
- Report incidents as the per the incident policy, particularly when the staff member believes that a breach of ethical conduct has been made.

Responsibility to uphold Child Safe Principles

All staff must:

- Act in accordance with WHFS Policy for Child Safety and procedures at all times.

- Behave respectfully, courteously, and ethically towards children and their families and towards other staff.
- Listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they communicate (verbally or non-verbally) that they do not feel safe or well.
- Promote the human rights, safety, and wellbeing of all children in WHFS.
- Demonstrate appropriate personal and professional boundaries.
- Consider and respect the diverse backgrounds and needs of children.
- Create an environment that promotes and enables children's participation and is welcoming, culturally safe, and inclusive for all children and their families.
- Involve children in making decisions about activities, policies and processes that concern them wherever possible.
- Contribute, where appropriate, to WHFS policies, discussions, learning and reviews about child safety and wellbeing.
- Identify and mitigate risks to children's safety and wellbeing as required by WHFS Risk Management Framework and within the WHFS risk assessment processes.
- Respond to any concerns or complaints of child harm or abuse promptly and in line with WHFS policy and procedure for receiving and responding to complaints.
- Report all suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse as required by The Children and Community Services Act 2004 [relevant legislation] and by WHFS Child Safety and Wellbeing policy and procedures on internal and external reporting.
- Comply with WHFS protocols on communicating with children.
- Comply with The State Records Act 2000 [relevant legislation] and WHFS policies and procedures on record keeping and information sharing.

#### Will NOT:

- Engage in any unlawful activity with or in relation to a child.
- Engage in any activity that is likely to harm a child physically, sexually or emotionally.
- Unlawfully discriminate against any child or their family members.
- Be alone with a child unnecessarily.
- Arrange personal contact, including online or out of hours contact, with children I am working with for a purpose unrelated to WHFS activities.
- Disclose personal or sensitive information about a child, including images of a child, unless the child and their parent or legal guardian provide written consent or unless I am required to do so by WHFS policy and procedure on reporting.
- Use inappropriate language in the presence of children or show or provide children with access to inappropriate images or material.
- Work with children while under the influence of alcohol or prohibited drugs.

- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse.

If I think this Code of Conduct has been breached by another person in WHFS, I will:

- Act to prioritise the best interests of children.
- Take actions promptly to ensure that children are safe.
- Promptly report any concerns to my Coordinator/Manager, Executive Manager, OSH representative and/or the Chief Executive Officer.
- Follow WHFS Child policies and procedures for receiving and responding to complaints and concerns.
- Comply with The Children and Community Services Act 2004 [legislative requirements on reporting] if relevant, and with WHFS policy and procedure on internal and external reporting.

Executive, Managers, Coordinators and Senior Staff, in addition to complying with the responsibilities detailed in the above section, must:

- Model the WHFS's values and professional conduct.
- Promote a collaborative and collegial workplace.
- Foster performance and development processes with staff under their supervision
- Provide ongoing support and feedback to staff under their supervision.
- Provide employees under their supervision with information about available support services and resources.
- Communicate the responsibilities under the Code to staff under their supervision.
- Establish systems for effective communication and consultation in decision-making.
- Utilise reporting systems when a breach of the Code may have occurred.
- Promptly address poor conduct and performance.

Human Resources:

- Provide advice to managers and staff, in relation to the Code of Conduct and its application.
- Role model the required behaviours and standards identified in the Code of Conduct.
- Model organisational values of Respect, Integrity, Diversity & Inclusion, and Innovation.

### **Related Policies and Procedures**

Policy for Disclosure of a Conflict of Interest by Employees

Mutual Respect Agreement

Policy for Child Safety

Policy and Procedure Manual for Client Records Management

### **Signed Agreement**

I have read this Policy and agree to comply with the stipulations and circumstances outlined herein.

Name of Employee:

Signature of Employee:

Service Area:



**SAMPLE ONLY**



Date: