



## Youth Handbook

### 7. Reporting Guidelines on Young People

Reporting on young people has its special challenges. In some instances, the act of reporting on young people places them at risk of retribution or stigmatization.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Canada is taking advantage of principles developed by UNICEF to assist Vincentian members, family, friends, journalists, etc. as they report on issues affecting young people. They are offered as guidelines that UNICEF and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul believes will help media to cover young people in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner. The guidelines are meant to support the best intentions of ethical reporters: serving the public interest without compromising the rights of young people.

#### I. Principles

The dignity and rights of every young person are to be respected in every circumstance.

In interviewing and reporting on young people, special attention is needed to ensure each person has a right to privacy and confidentiality, to have their opinions heard, to participate in decisions affecting them and to be protected from harm and retribution, including but not limited to, the potential of harm and retribution.

The best interests of each young person are to be protected over any other consideration, including over advocacy for youth issues and the promotion of child rights. When trying to determine the best interest of a young person, their right to have their views taken into account are to be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. Those closest to the young person's situation and best able to assess it they are to be consulted about the political, social and cultural ramifications of any reportage. Do not publish a story or an image which might put a child or a young person, siblings or peers at risk even when identities are changed, obscured or not used.

#### II. Guidelines for Interviewing Young People

Do no harm to any young person; avoid questions, attitudes or comments that are judgmental, insensitive to cultural values, that place them in danger or expose them to humiliation, or that reactivate any pain and grief from any traumatic events.

Do not discriminate in choosing young people to interview because of sex, race, age, religion, status, educational backgrounds or physical abilities.

No staging: Do not ask young people to tell a story or take an action that is not part of their own history.

Ensure that the child, young adult or guardian knows they are being interviewed. Explain the purpose of the interview and its intended use.

Obtain permission from the child or young adult and his or her parent/guardian for all interviews, videotaping and, when possible, documentary photographs. When possible and appropriate, this permission should be in writing. Permission must be obtained in circumstances that ensure that the child, young adult and guardian are not coerced in any way and that they understand that they are part of a story that might be disseminated locally and globally. This is usually only ensured if the permission is obtained in the child or young adult's language and if the decision is made in consultation with an adult that the young person trusts.



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Pay attention to where and how the young person is interviewed. Limit the number of interviewers and photographers. Try to make certain that the young person is comfortable and able to tell their story without outside pressure, including from the interviewer. In film, video and radio interviews, consider what the choice of visual or audio background might imply about the child and her or his life and story. Ensure that the young person would not be endangered or adversely affected by showing their home, community or general whereabouts.

### III. Guidelines for Reporting on Young People

Do not further stigmatize any young person; avoid categorization or descriptions that expose a young person to negative reprisals - including additional physical or psychological harm, or to lifelong abuse, discrimination or rejection by their local communities.

Always provide an accurate context for the young persons story or image.

Always change the name and obscure the visual identity of any child who is identified as:

- a. a victim of sexual abuse or exploitation,
- b. a perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse,
- c. HIV positive, or living with AIDS, unless the young person, a parent or a guardian gives fully informed consent,
- d. charged or convicted of a crime,
- e. a child combatant, or former child combatant who is holding a weapon or weapons.

In certain circumstances of risk or potential risk of harm or retribution, change the name and obscure the visual identity of any young person who is identified as:

- a. a former child combatant who is holding a weapon but may be at risk,
- b. an asylum seeker, a refugee or an internal displaced person.

In certain cases, using a young person's identity - their name and/or recognizable image - is in the young person's best interest. However, when the young person's identity is used, they must still be protected against harm and supported through any stigmatization or reprisals. Some examples of these special cases are:

- a. when a young person initiates contact, wanting to exercise their right to freedom of expression and their right to have their opinion heard.
- b. When a young person is part of a sustained program of activism or social mobilization and wants to be identified.
- c. When a young person is engaged in a psychological program and claiming their name and identity is part of their healthy development.

Confirm the accuracy of what the young person has to say, either with other young adults or an adult, preferably with both. When in doubt about whether a young person is at risk, report on the general situation for the youth rather than on an individual child, no matter how newsworthy the story.

### IV. Use of UNICEF and of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Canada materials

All UNICEF and Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Canada materials are protected by copyright, including text, photographs, other images and videotapes. Permission to reproduce any UNICEF and Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Canada material must be requested from the originating UNICEF and Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Office, and will only be granted on condition that these principles and guidelines are adhered to.



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### V. The Rule

#### Screening and Risk Management

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, a charitable organization, is committed to the protection and safeguard of:

- the vulnerable persons it serves
- vulnerable persons are those who are in a position of material or emotional need, who are sick, or who are physically, or mentally handicapped.
- its volunteers and employees

The Society has a moral, ethical and spiritual obligation to appropriately screen and train its volunteers and staff. It is legally required under the principle of “duty of care”. This responsibility is part of the risk management framework.

All potential members and employees of the Society, at any level, who, regularly or from time to time, have contact with and serve vulnerable persons, must successfully meet screening requirements, complete orientation and training and abide by applicable internal policies and procedures approved by the National Council of Canada.

The screening process must, for all members, include the following:

- completion of a Membership Application Form
- A Police Record Check
- A Screening interview of the applicant
- Interviews of applicant’s references
- Signature of a Service Covenant/Confidentiality Agreement
- Orientation and Training

#### Confidentiality and Disclosure

The concept of confidentiality is based on the individual’s right to privacy—expressed or implied, and has both legal and ethical implications. Confidentiality means that disclosures made by a family or an individual to any of the Vincentian conference or council members or staff will not be revealed to others, except in specific circumstances, and then only for the purpose of serving the family or individual in question.

Members shall observe the utmost confidentiality in the provision of material aid and any other kinds of help. Confidentiality is one of the building blocks for the development of mutual trust between the persons being served and the Society. Perhaps being served should be informed that their identity will be protected by the Society, and that their consent will be sought before any disclosure is made to persons or organizations outside the Society.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul may need to collaborate with other community groups or government agencies when serving those in need. In situations such as preparing Christmas hamper lists, obtaining assistance from food banks, making a referral to a government social agency, etc., it is sometimes important to share information with those outside the Society concerning the individual or family being served. Those in need, benefiting from such collaborators shall be informed of the necessary disclosures in such cases.



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Information about a family or an individual may be released to persons or organizations outside the Society, for example, the police or child protection services, without the informed consent of those concerned. This is the case if:

- the situation is urgent;
- there is a real danger that a person will cause harm to himself or herself or others;
- there is a real danger to the community at large

When time permits, the conference or council president should be consulted before action is taken.

Conferences and councils shall keep accurate and secure records of persons being served. These records as well as any archives should be kept in a secure place under the responsibility of the conference or council president or his or her substitute.

Confidentiality is part of the service covenant of all members and staff. A breach of this requirement may be grounds for requesting the resignation of the member or the employee. Members and staff of the Society should be informed of and guided by relevant internal policies and guidelines about disclosure.

### **Public Awareness and Communications**

The Society should inform the general public as well as the civil and religious authorities of its works, achievements and needs. This is essential for the Society in order to:

- have it recognized as a major Catholic charitable organization;
- thank supporters for their help
- promote its expansion and support, financial and otherwise

Sources:

The Convention on the Rights of the Child; Child Rights and the Media (Guidelines for Journalists), International Federation of Journalists; Media and Children in Need of Special Protection, (internal document), UNICEF's Division of Communication;

[https://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_tools\\_guidelines.html](https://www.unicef.org/media/media_tools_guidelines.html).

Second International Consultation on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights, United Nations Secretary-General, Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Canada Rule Book.