

REFLECTIVE SAFEGUARDING CODE OF ETHICS & PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT™

Spirit Led Institute

Founder and Originator of Reflective Safeguarding™: **Sharon Mackenzie**

1. Purpose

The Reflective Safeguarding Code of Ethics & Professional Conduct™ establishes the ethical and professional obligations of practitioners recognised by Spirit Led Institute.

The Code exists to:

- protect clients and members of the public;
- preserve client dignity, agency and informed choice;
- establish clear expectations for professional conduct;
- promote competent, ethical and accountable practice;
- guide practitioners when ethical tensions arise;
- provide standards against which professional conduct may be considered; and
- protect the integrity of Reflective Safeguarding™ as a professional modality.

Compliance with this Code is a condition of professional membership with Spirit Led Institute.

Members agree to be accountable to this Code and to the professional standards, policies and procedures applicable to their membership.

2. Foundational Ethical Principle

Reflective Safeguarding is founded upon the principle that:

Professional authority must never unnecessarily replace client authority.

The practitioner's knowledge, training and professional position create influence.

That influence must be exercised responsibly.

A Reflective Safeguarding Practitioner must not reproduce within the practitioner-client relationship the very dynamics of coercion, dependency, displaced authority, inappropriate responsibility or misuse of power that Reflective Safeguarding exists to help people recognise.

The practitioner's role is to support:

clarity, discernment, informed choice and appropriate personal agency.

3. Respect for Human Dignity

Practitioners must treat every client as a person of inherent dignity and worth.

Practitioners must not intentionally shame, humiliate, demean, intimidate, manipulate or exploit clients.

Differences in culture, faith, spirituality, worldview, gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic circumstances, family structure or personal values must not be used as grounds for degrading or

coercive treatment.

Practitioners must recognise the client's right to hold beliefs and values different from their own.

4. Client Agency

The client remains the primary decision-maker in their own life.

Practitioners must support rather than unnecessarily displace this authority.

Clients have the right to:

- make their own decisions;
- disagree with the practitioner;
- decline recommendations;
- ask questions;
- request clarification;
- establish boundaries;
- seek another professional opinion;
- pause or cease services;
- determine their own priorities; and
- make choices the practitioner may personally make differently.

A practitioner's role is not to produce compliance.

The practitioner must not intentionally create fear, obligation, guilt or dependency as a means of influencing client decisions.

5. Informed Choice and Consent

Practitioners must obtain informed consent before commencing Reflective Safeguarding services.

Clients must receive information reasonably necessary to understand:

- the nature of Reflective Safeguarding;
- the practitioner's role;
- the practitioner's qualifications and professional status;
- relevant fees and financial arrangements;
- confidentiality and its limitations;
- record-keeping practices;
- relevant risks or limitations;
- available complaint pathways; and
- their right to withdraw consent.

Consent is an ongoing process.

Practitioners must remain attentive to whether consent remains meaningful throughout the professional relationship.

6. Appropriate Use of Professional Power

Practitioners must recognise that professional relationships contain inherent power differences.

Professional knowledge, perceived expertise, access to personal information and the client's vulnerability may increase practitioner influence.

Practitioners must therefore use professional power carefully.

Practitioners must not:

- demand personal loyalty;
- cultivate unnecessary dependency;
- position themselves as the ultimate authority on the client's life;
- use fear or shame to secure compliance;
- exploit client vulnerability;
- pressure clients to remain in services;
- deliberately undermine a client's confidence in their own capacity for judgment;
- use professional status to dominate disagreement; or
- imply that disagreement with the practitioner demonstrates dysfunction, resistance or lack of insight.

Professional influence must be exercised in service of the client's wellbeing and agency.

7. Epistemic Humility

Reflective Safeguarding Practitioners must maintain appropriate humility about what they know.

Practitioners must distinguish between:

- observable information;
- information reported by the client;
- information reported by others;
- interpretation;
- professional concern;
- hypothesis;
- opinion; and
- established fact.

Practitioners must not manufacture certainty where certainty does not exist.

Practitioners may identify patterns or concerns while acknowledging uncertainty.

They must remain open to information that challenges their initial interpretation.

8. Reflective Neutrality

Reflective neutrality does not mean moral indifference or ignoring harm.

It means maintaining sufficient reflective discipline to avoid prematurely imposing conclusions upon the client.

Practitioners should help clients examine evidence, patterns, responsibility, power, boundaries and options without unnecessarily determining the client's conclusion for them.

Where a practitioner identifies significant risk, harm or safeguarding concerns, these concerns may be clearly named.

Professional concern must nevertheless be distinguished from established fact where appropriate.

9. Responsibility and Accountability

Practitioners must support the appropriate location of responsibility.

They must avoid encouraging clients to assume responsibility that properly belongs to:

- another individual;
- leadership;
- an organisation;
- a professional;
- a statutory authority; or
- a broader system.

Likewise, practitioners must not use Reflective Safeguarding to remove legitimate responsibility from a client.

The purpose is **rightly located responsibility**, not blame avoidance.

10. Professional Competence

Practitioners must practise only within areas in which they possess appropriate education, training and competence.

Practitioners are responsible for maintaining their professional competence.

They must:

- recognise the limits of their knowledge;
- seek supervision or consultation where appropriate;
- undertake continuing professional development;
- remain informed about relevant professional and legal obligations;
- refer where client needs exceed their competence; and
- cease or modify practice where their capacity to practise safely is materially impaired.

Completion of practitioner training does not remove the ongoing obligation to practise competently.

11. Scope of Practice

Practitioners must practise within the recognised scope of Reflective Safeguarding and within any additional professional scope they legitimately hold.

Practitioners must not represent Reflective Safeguarding as a substitute for services requiring qualifications or authority they do not possess.

This may include:

- medical diagnosis or treatment;
- psychological diagnosis;
- psychiatric care;
- legal advice;
- statutory investigation;
- law enforcement;
- emergency intervention; or

- specialist services outside the practitioner's competence.

Where a practitioner holds additional qualifications, they must take reasonable steps to ensure clients understand the capacity in which services are being provided.

12. Safeguarding and Duty of Care

Practitioners must take reasonable steps to protect clients from foreseeable harm arising from their professional practice.

Practitioners must understand applicable safeguarding, reporting and duty-of-care obligations relevant to their jurisdiction and practice setting.

Where significant risk is identified, practitioners must respond proportionately and within their professional and legal obligations.

Client agency remains important during safeguarding processes, but it does not override lawful reporting requirements or necessary emergency responses.

13. Referral

Practitioners must refer clients when needs arise beyond their competence or scope.

Referral should be:

- appropriate;
- timely;
- proportionate;
- clearly explained where circumstances permit; and
- undertaken in a manner that preserves client dignity and agency wherever possible.

Referral is recognised as an indicator of professional judgment rather than professional inadequacy.

Practitioners must not retain clients primarily for financial, relational or reputational reasons when another service is more appropriate.

14. Professional Boundaries

Practitioners are responsible for maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.

Particular care must be taken regarding:

- dual relationships;
- friendships with clients;
- sexual or romantic relationships;
- financial relationships;
- social media interaction;
- gifts;
- practitioner self-disclosure;
- communication outside sessions;
- dependency;
- physical contact;
- spiritual authority;

- conflicts of interest; and
- relationships involving existing organisational authority.

Practitioners must consider whether a boundary crossing may impair professional judgment, exploit vulnerability or compromise client safety.

15. Sexual and Romantic Conduct

Practitioners must not engage in sexualised behaviour toward clients or exploit the professional relationship for sexual or romantic purposes.

Practitioners must maintain appropriate boundaries regarding former clients and must consider vulnerability, dependency, duration and nature of the previous professional relationship and any applicable professional or legal requirements.

16. Financial Integrity

Fees and financial arrangements must be communicated clearly.

Practitioners must not:

- impose undisclosed fees;
- intentionally create unnecessary service dependency for financial benefit;
- misrepresent the necessity of additional sessions;
- exploit client vulnerability for financial gain; or
- make misleading claims about likely outcomes to secure payment.

Financial practices must be transparent and professionally appropriate.

17. Confidentiality

Practitioners must protect confidential client information.

Before substantive practice begins, clients should understand the nature and limits of confidentiality.

Information must not be disclosed without appropriate consent unless disclosure is:

- required by law;
- necessary under applicable safeguarding obligations;
- necessary to respond to serious and imminent safety concerns; or
- otherwise professionally and legally authorised.

Where disclosure is necessary, practitioners should disclose only information reasonably required for the relevant purpose.

18. Privacy and Record Keeping

Practitioners must comply with privacy, information-management and record-keeping requirements applicable to their jurisdiction and professional context.

Records should be:

- accurate;
- relevant;
- proportionate;

- securely maintained;
- respectful;
- appropriately retained; and
- appropriately destroyed when lawful retention requirements have expired.

Practitioners should distinguish factual information from professional interpretation within their records.

19. Cultural, Spiritual and Worldview Respect

Practitioners must respect the cultural, spiritual, religious and philosophical beliefs of clients.

Reflective Safeguarding must not be used as a vehicle for imposing the practitioner's worldview.

Practitioners may incorporate spiritual or faith-based approaches where:

- this falls within their competence;
- the nature of the service is clear;
- the client has freely chosen that approach; and
- meaningful consent has been established.

Spiritual authority must never be used to override client agency.

Claims such as divine authority, spiritual superiority or privileged spiritual knowledge must not be used to pressure a client into decisions.

20. Conflicts of Interest

Practitioners must identify and appropriately manage actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

Where a conflict may materially affect professional judgment or client safety, the practitioner must consider:

- disclosure;
- additional safeguards;
- consultation or supervision;
- transfer of care; or
- withdrawal from the professional relationship.

The interests of the practitioner, employer, organisation, ministry or referring party must not improperly override the interests and agency of the client.

21. Organisational and Third-Party Work

Where Reflective Safeguarding services are funded, requested or commissioned by an organisation or third party, practitioners must clarify:

- who the client is;
- who receives information;
- what information may be shared;
- the purpose of the engagement;
- confidentiality limitations; and
- any competing obligations.

Practitioners must not mislead individual participants about whose interests they have been engaged to serve.

22. Professional Representation

Practitioners must accurately represent:

- qualifications;
- professional memberships;
- registration status;
- experience;
- scope of practice;
- services;
- professional titles; and
- association with Spirit Led Institute.

Practitioners must not imply government registration, statutory authority or nationally recognised qualification where these do not exist.

Membership marks, professional designations and Institute intellectual property may only be used according to the conditions established by Spirit Led Institute.

23. Evidence and Professional Claims

Practitioners must communicate responsibly about Reflective Safeguarding.

They must not:

- guarantee outcomes;
- make unsupported therapeutic or health claims;
- claim Reflective Safeguarding can diagnose or cure conditions outside its scope;
- misrepresent evidence;
- manufacture testimonials;
- materially misrepresent client outcomes; or
- exaggerate professional authority.

Public communication should accurately reflect the nature and limitations of the modality.

24. Practitioner Self-Awareness

Practitioners must remain attentive to the influence of their own:

- assumptions;
- values;
- emotional responses;
- personal history;
- biases;
- rescue impulses;
- need for certainty;
- desire to be right;

- relationship with authority; and
- responses to conflict.

Practitioners must seek supervision, consultation or personal support where these factors materially interfere with professional judgment.

Reflective practice begins with the practitioner as well as the client.

25. Dependency and Professional Closure

Reflective Safeguarding should strengthen rather than diminish client agency.

Practitioners should periodically consider whether continued engagement remains beneficial.

Where the purpose of the professional relationship has been fulfilled, practitioners should support appropriate closure.

Practitioners must not unnecessarily prolong services because they enjoy being needed, fear losing the relationship or derive financial or personal benefit from continued dependency.

26. Collegial Conduct

Practitioners should treat colleagues and other professionals respectfully.

Professional disagreement should be handled without unnecessary personal attack, intimidation or misrepresentation.

Nothing in this provision prevents practitioners from raising legitimate safeguarding, ethical, professional or public-interest concerns.

Professional courtesy must never be used to suppress appropriate accountability.

27. Concerns About Another Practitioner

Where a practitioner becomes aware of conduct by another Reflective Safeguarding Practitioner that may create serious risk to clients or substantially breach professional standards, they should respond proportionately.

Depending upon the circumstances, this may include:

- consultation;
- encouraging corrective action;
- raising the matter through the Institute's professional conduct process;
- referral to another professional body; or
- notification to an appropriate authority where legally required.

Concerns must not be knowingly fabricated or weaponised for personal, commercial or reputational advantage.

28. Cooperation With Professional Conduct Processes

Members must cooperate reasonably and honestly with legitimate complaints, professional conduct and review processes administered under Spirit Led Institute policies.

Members must not:

- retaliate against a complainant;

- intimidate witnesses;
- deliberately destroy relevant records;
- knowingly provide false information; or
- interfere improperly with a professional conduct process.

Participation in a complaint process does not itself establish wrongdoing.

Procedural fairness applies to all parties.

29. Breaches of the Code

Alleged breaches of this Code may be considered under the Spirit Led Institute Complaints, Professional Conduct & Appeals Procedure.

Depending upon seriousness, context and evidence, outcomes may include:

- no further action;
- guidance;
- education;
- additional supervision;
- remedial training;
- formal warning;
- conditions upon professional membership;
- temporary suspension;
- removal from the practitioner register;
- termination of membership; or
- referral to an appropriate external authority where required.

Responses should be proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the conduct.

30. Procedural Fairness

Professional accountability must itself reflect safeguarding principles.

A practitioner subject to a complaint has the right to:

- understand the substance of the concern;
- have a reasonable opportunity to respond;
- have relevant information considered;
- be treated without predetermined guilt;
- have conflicts of interest appropriately managed;
- receive reasons for significant adverse decisions; and
- access an appropriate review or appeal process.

Safeguarding must never become justification for abandoning fairness.

31. Obligation to Maintain Professional Standing

Members are responsible for maintaining the requirements applicable to their professional designation.

This may include:

- current membership;
- continuing professional development;
- supervision or reflective practice;
- appropriate professional insurance where required;
- compliance with this Code;
- compliance with the Reflective Safeguarding Professional Practice Standard™; and
- notification of matters materially affecting eligibility for professional recognition where required by Institute policy.

Professional designation may only be used while the practitioner remains entitled to use it.

32. Commitment of the Reflective Safeguarding Practitioner

By accepting professional membership with Spirit Led Institute, I commit to practise Reflective Safeguarding with integrity, competence and humility.

I will respect the dignity and agency of the people I serve.

I will use professional power responsibly.

I will not make myself the authority over another person's life.

I will distinguish what I know from what I interpret.

I will recognise the limits of my competence.

I will seek consultation, supervision and referral when appropriate.

I will maintain professional boundaries.

I will accept accountability for my professional conduct.

I will protect the integrity of Reflective Safeguarding practice.

Above all, I will remember that the purpose of Reflective Safeguarding is not to make another person dependent upon my discernment.

It is to support them to recover and exercise their own.

Professional Declaration

I confirm that I have read and understood the **Reflective Safeguarding Code of Ethics & Professional Conduct™**.

I agree to abide by this Code as a condition of my professional membership and recognition through Spirit Led Institute.

I understand that alleged breaches may be considered under the Institute's applicable complaints and professional conduct procedures and may affect my professional membership or recognition.

Member Name:** _____

Membership Number: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

****Reflective Safeguarding Code of Ethics & Professional Conduct™**

Spirit Led Institute

Founder and Originator of Reflective Safeguarding™

Sharon Mackenzie

Professional authority must never unnecessarily replace client authority.