

REFLECTIVE SAFEGUARDING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE STANDARD™

Established by Spirit Led Institute

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

1. Purpose

The Reflective Safeguarding Professional Practice Standard™ establishes the foundational principles, scope, ethical expectations and minimum standards for the professional practice of Reflective Safeguarding.

It exists to:

- protect the dignity, agency and wellbeing of clients;
- define safe and competent Reflective Safeguarding practice;
- establish appropriate professional boundaries;
- provide consistency across Reflective Safeguarding practitioners;
- establish expectations for education, competency and continuing professional development;
- protect the integrity of Reflective Safeguarding as a distinct professional modality; and
- provide a foundation for professional membership and practitioner recognition through Spirit Led Institute.

Reflective Safeguarding is founded upon a central principle:

Professional authority must never replace client authority.

The role of the practitioner is not to take control of the client's decisions, determine the client's reality for them, or prescribe an outcome.

The practitioner supports the conditions in which **clarity, discernment, informed choice and appropriate personal agency can be restored and exercised.**

2. Definition of Reflective Safeguarding

Reflective Safeguarding™ is a structured reflective practice modality for exploring relational, organisational and systemic situations that may be affecting a person's wellbeing, agency, dignity, psychological safety, boundaries or capacity for informed choice.

Reflective Safeguarding assists clients to examine what is occurring, recognise relevant patterns and dynamics, locate responsibility appropriately, understand the operation of power and authority, identify available choices and determine their own appropriate response.

It may be used in individual, relational, workplace, community, leadership, ministry and organisational contexts where circumstances have become confusing, tangled, pressured, unsafe or difficult to interpret.

Reflective Safeguarding does not require the practitioner to determine who is right or wrong.

Its purpose is to help the client **see clearly enough to choose freely.**

3. Core Practice Philosophy

Reflective Safeguarding recognises that people can experience a loss or erosion of agency when exposed to:

- relational pressure;
- power imbalance;
- unclear authority;
- conflicting expectations;
- systemic dysfunction;
- chronic ambiguity;
- inappropriate responsibility;
- coercive or controlling dynamics;
- communication breakdown;
- unresolved relational rupture; or
- environments in which their observations, boundaries or decision-making capacity have been repeatedly overridden.

Reflective Safeguarding does not seek to replace one external authority with another.

The practitioner therefore does not become the person who tells the client what their experience means or what they must do.

Instead, the practitioner facilitates a structured process through which the client can examine their experience, access relevant information, distinguish responsibility, understand available options and exercise informed choice.

Power is not transferred from the client to the practitioner.

Where appropriate agency has been diminished, the practice seeks to support its return to the client.

4. The Reflective Safeguarding Practitioner

A Reflective Safeguarding Practitioner is trained to facilitate the Reflective Safeguarding process within the scope of their education, competency and professional role.

The practitioner acts as a:

reflective facilitator, pattern observer, safeguarding practitioner and supporter of informed decision-making.

The practitioner is not automatically acting as a:

- psychologist;
- psychiatrist;
- medical practitioner;
- lawyer;
- investigator;
- mediator;
- arbitrator;
- law-enforcement officer;
- organisational decision-maker; or

- statutory safeguarding authority.

A practitioner who separately holds another professional qualification may practise within that additional scope where appropriate, but must clearly distinguish those roles from Reflective Safeguarding practice.

5. Client Agency and Informed Choice

Client agency is a foundational requirement of Reflective Safeguarding practice.

Clients have the right to:

- make their own decisions;
- disagree with the practitioner;
- determine their own priorities;
- decline a suggested avenue of exploration;
- change their mind;
- choose whether or not to take action;
- establish personal boundaries;
- seek another professional opinion;
- cease the Reflective Safeguarding process; and
- determine, within applicable legal and safety constraints, what happens next.

Practitioners must provide sufficient information for clients to make informed choices about participating in Reflective Safeguarding.

Informed consent is an ongoing process rather than a single administrative event.

6. Appropriate Use of Practitioner Power

The practitioner-client relationship inherently creates a degree of professional influence.

Reflective Safeguarding Practitioners must therefore remain conscious of their own authority and must not use their position to unnecessarily direct, control, pressure or create dependency in clients.

Practitioners must not present their interpretation as unquestionable truth.

Practitioners should distinguish between:

observation — interpretation — professional concern — client decision.

The practitioner may identify patterns, inconsistencies, risks or safeguarding concerns.

The client retains decision-making authority except where the practitioner has an overriding legal or professional obligation relating to safety, reporting or disclosure.

7. Scope of Practice

Reflective Safeguarding may include:

- structured exploration of a presenting concern;
- clarification of events and chronology;
- identification of relational and systemic patterns;
- exploration of responsibility and accountability;
- examination of power and authority;

- boundary clarification;
 - communication analysis;
 - consideration of psychological and relational safety;
 - identification of systemic gaps;
 - exploration of rupture and repair;
 - identification of available choices;
 - support for informed decision-making;
 - consideration of proportionate responses;
 - identification of circumstances requiring referral or escalation; and
 - supporting clients to release responsibility that appropriately belongs elsewhere.
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8. The Reflective Safeguarding Practice Process

While professional judgment is required in individual circumstances, Reflective Safeguarding generally follows the following practice sequence:

PRESENT

What is happening?



CLARIFY

What has actually occurred?



SEPARATE

What is observable fact, interpretation, assumption, emotion or reported information?



MAP

What relational, structural or systemic dynamics are operating?



LOCATE

Where do responsibility, accountability, authority and power appropriately sit?



SAFEGUARD

What boundaries, risks, vulnerabilities or protective factors need consideration?



DISCERN

What options are genuinely available?



INFORM

Does the client have sufficient information to make a meaningful choice?



CHOOSE

What does the client want to do?



RESPOND / REFER / RELEASE

What belongs to the client now—and what does not?



CLOSE

What clarity has been reached and what remains unresolved?

The process is not necessarily linear. A practitioner may return to earlier stages as new information or insight emerges.

9. Neutrality and Epistemic Humility

Reflective Safeguarding requires practitioners to maintain appropriate humility regarding what they can and cannot know.

Practitioners should distinguish:

- what the client directly observed;
- what another person reportedly said or did;
- the client's interpretation;
- the practitioner's interpretation;
- information that can be independently established; and
- information that remains uncertain.

Practitioners must not manufacture certainty where certainty is unavailable.

Neutrality does not require practitioners to ignore observable harm, coercion, unsafe behaviour or significant power imbalance.

It requires the practitioner to remain disciplined about the basis upon which conclusions are formed.

10. Responsibility and Right Order

Reflective Safeguarding recognises that inappropriate responsibility can itself become a source of psychological and relational burden.

Practitioners support clients to examine:

What belongs to me?

What belongs to another person?

What belongs to leadership?

What belongs to an organisation or system?

What requires external intervention?

What can remain unresolved without being carried by me?

The purpose is not avoidance of legitimate responsibility.

It is the appropriate location of responsibility.

11. Boundaries

Practitioners must maintain appropriate professional boundaries.

This includes boundaries concerning:

- practitioner availability;
- communication outside sessions;
- dual relationships;
- financial arrangements;
- confidentiality;
- social media;
- gifts;
- dependency;
- conflicts of interest;
- spiritual or ideological influence;
- practitioner self-disclosure; and
- the distinction between professional support and personal relationship.

Practitioners must not intentionally cultivate client dependency.

The successful outcome of Reflective Safeguarding should ordinarily increase rather than diminish the client's capacity to exercise their own judgment and agency.

12. Contraindications and Limitations

Reflective Safeguarding is not intended to replace emergency, medical, psychiatric, psychological, legal, statutory safeguarding or crisis services.

A practitioner must recognise circumstances in which Reflective Safeguarding alone is insufficient.

These may include situations involving:

- immediate risk of serious harm;
- acute mental health crisis;
- medical emergency;
- risk of suicide or serious self-harm;
- credible threats of serious violence;
- child protection concerns;
- circumstances triggering mandatory reporting obligations;
- criminal conduct requiring specialist intervention;
- domestic or family violence requiring specialist safety planning;
- circumstances requiring legal advice;
- severe impairment affecting informed consent or decision-making; or
- needs outside the practitioner's competence.

Appropriate referral, consultation, escalation or emergency intervention must occur where required.

13. Referral

Referral is not a failure of Reflective Safeguarding practice.

It is an expression of professional competence.

Practitioners must recognise the limits of their training and refer appropriately when a client's needs exceed those limits.

Referral may include:

- medical practitioners;
- psychologists;
- counsellors or psychotherapists;
- domestic and family violence services;
- legal practitioners;
- emergency services;
- child protection authorities;
- specialist safeguarding professionals;
- workplace or WHS specialists;
- regulatory bodies; or
- other appropriately qualified professionals.

Where possible and appropriate, referral should preserve client agency and informed choice.

14. Competency

Professional recognition as a Reflective Safeguarding Practitioner requires demonstrated competency rather than course attendance alone.

Competency should include the ability to:

- establish appropriate scope and consent;
 - facilitate structured reflective inquiry;
 - differentiate observation from interpretation;
 - recognise relevant patterns without overstating conclusions;
 - map responsibility appropriately;
 - recognise power and authority dynamics;
 - maintain professional boundaries;
 - preserve client agency;
 - identify safeguarding concerns;
 - recognise limitations and contraindications;
 - refer appropriately;
 - document practice appropriately;
 - manage ethical dilemmas; and
 - bring the Reflective Safeguarding process to appropriate closure.
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15. Professional Ethics

Reflective Safeguarding Practitioners must practise with:

Dignity.
Integrity.
Clarity.
Humility.
Competence.
Accountability.
Respect for agency.
Appropriate use of power.

Practitioners must not exploit clients financially, emotionally, relationally, sexually, spiritually or professionally.

They must not knowingly misrepresent their qualifications, professional status, experience or scope of practice.

16. Confidentiality and Information Management

Practitioners must explain confidentiality and its limitations before substantive practice begins.

Client information must be collected, stored, accessed, used and disclosed appropriately and in accordance with applicable privacy, health-record and other legal requirements.

Practitioners must collect only information reasonably necessary for their professional purpose and maintain appropriate safeguards for sensitive information.

Where disclosure may be required because of law or serious safety concerns, practitioners should explain the relevant limits of confidentiality as clearly as circumstances permit.

17. Documentation

Practitioners must maintain records appropriate to their practice, professional obligations and applicable law.

Records should be:

- relevant;
- proportionate;
- factual;
- distinguish observation from interpretation;
- securely maintained;
- respectful of the client; and
- sufficient to demonstrate appropriate professional practice.

Records should not become unnecessary repositories of speculation about clients or third parties.

18. Continuing Professional Development

Professional competency requires ongoing development.

Members recognised by Spirit Led Institute as practising Reflective Safeguarding Practitioners may be required to complete continuing professional development as a condition of ongoing professional

membership.

Relevant CPD may include:

- safeguarding;
 - trauma-informed practice;
 - ethics;
 - relational practice;
 - psychosocial safety;
 - professional boundaries;
 - cultural responsiveness;
 - power and authority;
 - legal and regulatory developments;
 - reflective practice; and
 - advanced Reflective Safeguarding education.
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19. Supervision and Reflective Practice

Reflective Safeguarding Practitioners should have access to appropriate professional supervision, consultation or structured reflective practice.

Supervision should support:

- practitioner self-awareness;
- identification of bias;
- ethical decision-making;
- management of complex cases;
- appropriate boundaries;
- recognition of rescue or over-responsibility;
- responsible use of practitioner power; and
- maintenance of professional competence.

Supervision must not become a mechanism through which the client's decision-making authority is transferred to the supervisor.

20. Professional Recognition

Spirit Led Institute may establish professional membership categories for individuals who meet its education, competency, ethical and continuing-practice requirements.

Recognition by Spirit Led Institute represents professional recognition within the Institute's own professional standards framework.

It must not be represented as statutory registration, government accreditation or another form of regulatory recognition unless such recognition has separately been obtained.

Practitioners must accurately represent their membership status and qualifications.

21. Practitioner Register

Spirit Led Institute may maintain a public register of Reflective Safeguarding Practitioners who meet its current professional membership requirements.

The register may identify:

- practitioner name;
- professional designation;
- membership status;
- membership number;
- recognised level of practice;
- relevant qualifications where verified;
- current membership standing; and
- other information reasonably necessary to allow the public to verify professional recognition.

Inclusion on the register does not constitute government registration or statutory licensing.

22. Complaints and Professional Conduct

Clients and members of the public must have access to a clear process for raising concerns regarding the professional conduct of recognised practitioners.

Complaints must be handled according to principles of:

fairness, independence, confidentiality, proportionality, transparency and procedural fairness.

A practitioner who is the subject of a complaint must be given reasonable opportunity to understand and respond to allegations.

Where possible, individuals responsible for determining serious professional-conduct matters should not have a material conflict of interest.

Possible outcomes may include:

- no further action;
- education or professional guidance;
- additional supervision;
- conditions on membership;
- remedial training;
- formal warning;
- suspension of professional recognition; or
- termination of membership.

An appropriate review or appeal mechanism must be available for significant adverse decisions.

23. Protection of the Modality

Reflective Safeguarding™ is a distinct professional methodology originated by Sharon Mackenzie and developed through Spirit Led Institute.

Spirit Led Institute is responsible for maintaining the integrity, educational standards and professional development of the Reflective Safeguarding methodology.

Professional recognition does not transfer ownership of the underlying intellectual property to practitioners.

Use of Institute-owned intellectual property, professional designations, certification marks, educational materials and proprietary frameworks is subject to the permissions and conditions established by Spirit Led Institute.

Practitioners remain free to exercise independent professional judgment within their lawful scope of practice.

24. Foundational Professional Principle

Reflective Safeguarding exists to restore rather than capture agency.

Its practitioners do not seek to become the authority over another person's life.

They create structured reflective space in which confusion can become clearer, responsibility can be located appropriately, power can be recognised, boundaries can be understood and meaningful choices can become visible.

The final authority for the client's ordinary life decisions remains with the client.

**See clearly.
Discern wisely.
Choose freely.
Carry only what is yours.**

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