

# Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Greater Toronto Central Council

## Policy # 23

### **Policy: Complaints Resolution and Vincentian Conduct**

**Part 1:** Process for Vincentian Members, Conferences and Particular Councils

**Part 2:** Vincentians who act outside their area of Responsibility

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**Approved By:**    Board of Directors

**References:**      Anti Abuse Policy, Screening Policy, Membership Policy,  
Vincentian Covenant

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#### **Statement**

Complaints involving Vincentians are to be resolved, wherever possible, closest to the source of the complaint. This policy does not apply to employees. Employee complaints not involving Vincentians must be reported to the Executive Director and will be resolved following procedures established for managing staff concerns.

Complaints will be addressed professionally, competently and in a timely manner applying principles of confidentiality and procedural fairness.

### **Part 1**

This policy is implemented by using the following Complaint Handling Procedures.

#### **Complaint Handling Procedures**

For complaints that arise from apparent misunderstandings, every effort will be made to resolve these informally. Should the complaint not be resolved, or parties not feel satisfied, complaints will be submitted in writing to the Executive Director.

##### **1. Assessing and referring complaints:**

The Executive Director will assess the complaint. If the complaint appears to be such that the informal option of resolving complaints may achieve a satisfactory resolution, the persons involved will be requested to follow the informal options and will be required to report on the resolution status to the Executive Director. If the informal option of complaint resolution does not appear to be a reasonable option for solving the complaint, the Executive Director, in consultation with the Board Chair, or other parties as needed, will decide on the appropriate option for resolution of the complaint.

The options for resolution of a complaint may include, but are not limited to:

### **Informal options**

- Self-resolution – parties handle the issue personally
- Assisted resolution – seek to reach resolution with the help of a colleague, support person, or the Executive Director
- Facilitation of communications, options and resolution
- Mediation

### **Formal options**

The Executive Director and Chair of the Board shall consult with the Particular Council President and will establish an ad hoc committee to manage the formal options for resolution of the complaint if required. The components of formal resolution include:

- Intervention
- Investigation

## **2. Obtaining advice and delegation**

Persons involved in handling the complaint may be, in addition to the Executive Director, a representative of the next higher level, which may include the Conference President, the Particular Council President, other parties as deemed helpful to the process by the Executive Director, or the Chair of the Board who may delegate their authority to another member of the Board, or a Committee Chair. Should the complaint involve the Executive Director, the Chair of the Board shall handle the complaint and determine the participants in the resolution process.

Should the complaint involve the Chair of the Board, an officer of the Board shall manage the process.

## **3. Confidentiality**

To maintain confidentiality, all participants in the process should restrict the information about the complaint to those who need to know of the complaint, in order to:

- refer the complaint
- manage the complaint
- provide advice and support in the process
- review and decide upon appropriate complaint mechanisms
- apply the process

## **4. Record keeping**

Those involved in investigating complaints will keep written records of the complaint resolution process and outcomes. Complaint records will be filed and stored with the Executive Director.

## **5. Review and Appeal**

Either party may request a review of a decision and should an appeal be required, it shall be escalated to the Chair of the Board who shall appoint a review committee, for the purpose of hearing an appeal. The request for a review must be made within 10 days from the date of the written findings and detail the grounds for the request. A written response will be provided within a further 10 days of the appeal.

## **Summary of Processes for handling complaints from or about:**

### **Neighbours in Need**

Complaints are generally received by the office staff at the Greater Toronto Central Council Office (GTCC) and will be initially redirected to the Conference President for resolution. Should the complaint not be satisfied at the local level using the options under the informal resolution process, the complaint will be directed to the Particular Council President who shall notify the Executive Director. Together, they will develop a plan to address the complaint following this procedure:

- Discussion of the complaint with the Conference President
  - Discussion of the complaint with the Vincentian(s) involved
  - Discussion of the complaint with the Neighbour in Need with possible solutions ➤ All findings will be documented and a solution will be proposed
- Should the complaint remain unresolved after these steps have been taken, the Executive Director will report the complaint to the Board Chair.
  - In the event that the complaint involves allegations of abuse, the process identified in the Anti Abuse Policy #08 posted on the Society's website will be followed.
  - All information will be kept confidential and will be shared only with those who are directly involved in resolving the complaint.
  - Documentation concerning the complaint will be retained by the Executive Director and is not to be kept with the Conference or Particular Council.
  - Complaints will be considered in the evaluation and effectiveness of our outreach.

### **Vincentians**

Complaints from Vincentians concerning treatment of, or interactions with, other Vincentians shall be addressed as follows:

- The Conference President will facilitate a mediation process between the parties, with the goal of resolving the complaint following the informal resolution process. If the matter is not resolved at the Conference level, the local Particular Council President will facilitate a mediation process between the parties with the goal to resolve the complaint following the informal resolution process. Guidance should be sought from the Executive Director.
  - If the complaint includes the Conference President, the Particular Council President will notify the Executive Director of the complaint and together they will devise a plan to address the complaint which may include meditation.
1. Should the complaint remain unresolved after these steps have been taken, the Executive Director will report the complaint to the Board Chair, who may appoint an ad hoc committee to further investigate the complaint.
  2. In the event that the complaint involves allegations of abuse, the Executive Director must be notified and the process identified in the Anti Abuse Policy #08, posted on the Society's website, will be followed.

3. All information will be kept confidential and will be only shared with those who are directly involved in resolving the complaint.
4. Documentation concerning the complaint will be shared with the complainant and retained by the Executive Director and is not to be kept with the Conference or Particular Council.
5. Complaints will be considered in the evaluation and effectiveness of our outreach.
6. In the event that the complaint involves the Particular Council President, the matter will be reported to the Board Chair, and steps 2, 3, 4, 5 will be followed.

## **Pastors**

Complaints from Pastors are typically received by the staff at the head office of the Greater Toronto Central Council and are referred to the Executive Director. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Conference President or Particular Council President shall be notified, and the Spiritual Advisor or Bishop may also be involved in the resolution process.

If the matter is not solved after following the informal resolution process, the following steps will be taken:

- The Executive Director will report the complaint to the Board Chair, and together they will determine the appropriate persons to be involved in the investigation process.
- In the event that the complaint involves allegations of abuse, the Executive Director must be notified and the process identified in the Anti Abuse Policy #08, posted on the Society's website, will be followed.
- All information will be kept confidential and will only be shared with those who are directly involved in resolving the complaint.
- Documentation concerning the complaint will be shared with the complainant and retained by the Executive Director and is not to be kept with the Conference or Particular Council.
- Complaints will be considered in the evaluation and effectiveness of our outreach.

## **Part 2**

### **Vincentians who act outside their area of responsibility thereby putting the Society at risk**

*From time to time, the Board of Directors must exercise their responsibility to ensure that Vincentian volunteers properly meet the expectations of the Society within the Greater Central Council catchment.*

Where a volunteer's behaviour is unacceptable because it is illegal, careless, violates policies, causes intentional harm, misrepresents the Society, or puts people or the organization at risk, the decision to terminate a Vincentians involvement will be managed by the Board of Directors.

The relationship between the Society and Vincentians is founded on the understanding that Vincentians accept the responsibilities of their role and are accountable for their actions. Policies and procedures support this understanding and enable Vincentians to conduct their outreach in a manner that is compliant with the Society's expectations, outreach, and insurance commitment. All concerns brought forward will be investigated, no matter the source.

Should a concern over conduct not be resolved by following the process outlined in Part 1 of this policy, the Vincentian will be asked to meet with the Board Chair or designate, and the Executive Director. Every effort will be made to resolve the challenges created by the actions of the Vincentian by committing to a mutually agreeable, reasonable, timely solution. Examples of challenges that will be addressed include, but are not limited to:

- Failing to follow a policy; either by misunderstanding the contents, or the intentional disregard for the contents
- Signing contracts, agreements or undertakings which commit the Society either financially or to obligations outside of standard banking agreements. Standard banking agreements are for the express purpose of managing the day to day finances of a Conference or Particular Council including deposits, pass-ups, the purchase of food gift cards, payment of clothing and furniture vouchers, or routine Conference expenses. Bequests, uncharacteristic donations and investments must all be reported to Toronto Central Council for direction prior to accepting the donation or executing documentation.
- Developing alternative ways to serve, modifying volunteer screening material or implementing new programs without the approval of the Greater Toronto Central Council
- Failing to report the financial and operational status of the Conference or Particular Council regularly, monthly or as requested
- Other actions that may put the Society or other Vincentians at risk

In the event that a reasonable solution to the concerns cannot be reached, or the Vincentian refuses to participate constructively in efforts to resolve the challenges, the Board will, upon further review of the matter, make a final decision on the status of the Vincentian which may include suspension or termination of their volunteer commitment. The Vincentian will be notified of the decision, in writing. The written decision will include timelines and insurance status; the Particular Council President will also be notified of the decision.

It is understood, that from time to time, entire Conferences may act outside their area of responsibility, or that members may stand together with a particular Vincentian who may be identified as the cause of the challenge, as listed above. In these cases, the Conference Executive or all members may be asked to participate in the problem solving process. Should the Conference not be willing to comply with the policies of GTCC or is unable to meet requests for compliance, the Conference may be suspended for a period of time. GTCC is unable to insure Vincentians whose actions are not approved by GTCC; members and Conferences cannot act without insurance. The Particular Council will be kept informed of all developments.