SAFEGUARDING INVESTIGATIONS PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES

These procedures are global. WCCM National Committees should provide additional guidance on the need to comply with local legal and regulatory requirements in their jurisdiction. These procedures are to be read and applied in conjunction with the WCCM Safeguarding Handbook and Safeguarding Confidentiality and Disclosure Policies

KEY PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE SAFEGUARDING PROCESS

- Safety first – Act immediately to protect anyone at risk
- Legal Compliance: Follow all mandatory reporting laws.
- Respectful and Fair to all parties – Treat all parties with dignity and impartiality
- Transparency: Explain the process clearly within confidentiality limits.
- Independent – Avoid any conflict of interests; separate investigative and decision-making functions
- Trauma-Informed Practice – Recognize the impact of abuse and minimize re-traumatization
- Documentation: Keep complete, accurate, and secure records.
- Accountability: Apply standards consistently and learn from each case.
- Ethics: Align actions with WCCM's principles and mission.

SAFEGUARDING INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES

Upon receipt of a safeguarding concern, for example through a disclosure or third-party allegation, WCCM's safeguarding investigation procedures will be initiated as follows:

Initial Steps

- Ensure the immediate safety of the alleged victim.
- Complete any legally required reporting
- Offer counseling support to individual if needed
- Record the concern clearly, thoroughly, and accurately.
- Reports should be completed in complainant's own words.
- Use Template 1: Incident Report Form
- Determine if the allegation meets the definition of safeguarding violations and/or involves vulnerable persons (See Appendix 5 of the Safeguarding Handbook)
- See Appendix 5 of the Safeguarding Handbook for internal reporting requirements.

Planning the Investigation

- Appoint Investigating Officer
- Set Terms of reference (see Template #2)
- Identify relevant witnesses and evidence (See Template #3)
- Liaise with external authorities as necessary
- Plan interviews
- On maintaining any records related to this investigation, this should be in compliance with local General Data Protection Regulations and legislation, as well as with WCCM's Data Protection Policy.

Conflicts of Interest

- Confirm the Safeguarding Officer or designated Investigating Officer has no conflict. If there are any conflicts then another non-conflicted member of the Board or another Investigating Officer will be assigned for the investigation
- For clarity:
    - The proposed Investigating Officer must not directly line manage any staff or volunteer involved in the allegations
    - The Investigating Officer must have sufficient safeguarding experience and training to identify and analyze relevant evidence
    - The Investigating Officer must not have any disposition toward the allege perpetrator.
- The Board of Trustees oversees but does not conduct investigations.
- If a Board member is involved in the complaint, then they are recused; if the Chair is involved, a special Board subcommittee is constituted and oversees.

Collaboration with Authorities

- The local Event leaders or Safeguarding Person should report the concerns to relevant external organizations where legally required or deemed necessary. (See Safeguarding Handbook Appendices #1 and #2).
- Notify law enforcement first if criminal conduct is suspected. After law enforcement investigations are completed, then run an internal review.
- Cooperate fully with external agencies while ensuring the organization's own duties to pastoral care are met.
- Maintain communication lines with authorities about timing to avoid interference.

Trauma-Informed Practice

Investigations must recognize the impact of abuse, coercive control, and power imbalance on disclosure, memory, and consent.

Respondent Right of Reply

The respondent must be given a meaningful opportunity to respond to concerns or allegations raised , including the ability to:

- address each alleged behavior;
- provide context or explanation;
- submit relevant evidence;
- identify witnesses (without speculative or intrusive inquiries).

Decision-Making and Follow-Up

After investigation findings are complete:

- Investigator prepares a written report summarizing allegations, evidence, findings, and recommendations for action
- The Board of Trustees should review evidence objectively and decide on appropriate action—disciplinary, administrative, or pastoral. (If one of the Board members is the subject of an investigation, then they are to be recused from the discussions and decision-making.)
- Communicate outcomes to relevant parties within privacy limits.
- Provide aftercare: support to victim(s), accused (if cleared or disciplined), and community to prevent retaliation or stigma.

INVESTIGATION PRINCIPLES

These principles will guide the investigation process:

Transparency and Clear Process

- Log and assign every report.
- Acknowledge reports within 24–48 hours.
- Define the investigator's scope: what questions to ask, what evidence to collect.
- Keep confidentiality on a need-to-know basis.
- Maintain secure, dated records of all interviews, findings, and actions.

Fairness, Natural Justice, and Trauma-Informed Practice

A respondent has the right to:

- understand the nature of the concerns raised;
- know the behaviors alleged; and
- respond meaningfully.

This right does not extend to automatic access to complainant identities, raw testimonies, or confidential personal information.

Good Governance and Prevention

Long-term prevention is as important as investigation.

- Maintain an updated, publicly available safeguarding policy.
- Appoint a Safeguarding officer with clear authority.
- Train trustees, staff, and volunteers on recognizing and reporting abuse.
- Establish a confidential reporting mechanism hotline (listen@wccm.org) for reporting concerns.
- improve policies, training, and oversight based on lessons learned

Ethical and Religious Considerations

- Keep pastoral care separate from investigative accountability.
- Model transparency and integrity. trust depends on establishing visible fairness.
- Consult denominational safeguarding offices or umbrella organizations for best practices

Safeguarding Investigation Templates

This document provides standard templates for use in investigations of abuse or other safeguarding concerns within the World Community for Christian Meditation. Each section may be customized with the organization's name, logo, and case details.

Template 1: Incident Report Form

Use this form to record initial details of any reported or suspected emotional abuse incident.

Date of Report:

Name of Person Reporting:

Role/Position:

Name(s) of Alleged Victim(s):

Date of Birth:

Contact details:

Name and addresses of legal guardian (if child) or carer (if vulnerable adult):

Was consent obtained to sharing the safeguarding concern (Y/N):

Name(s) of Alleged Perpetrator(s):

Description of Allegation / Incident (include dates, times, location):

Immediate Actions Taken (safety, reporting, support):

Reported To (Safeguarding Trustee / Staff Safeguarding Staff Person):

Template 2: Investigator's Terms of Reference

This document outlines the scope, authority, and responsibilities of the appointed investigator for a specific safeguarding case.

Case Reference: _____

Investigator Name: _____

Date Appointed: _____

- Date of alleged incident:
- Date alleged incident reported:
- Scope of Investigation:
  - Determine whether abuse occurred as alleged.
  - Determine if minor, elderly, or vulnerable person is involved.
  - Review relevant documentation and interview involved parties.
  - Assess evidence and prepare a written report with findings and recommendations.
- Authority and Access:
  - Full access to relevant records, witnesses, and locations as authorized by the Board of Trustees
  - Obligation to maintain confidentiality and neutrality throughout the process.
- Data Protection: Confidentiality and anonymization of names
- Timeline and Deliverables:
  - Expected completion: within 30–45 days of appointment.
  - Deliver a written report to the Board of Trustees Chair.

Signatures:

Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Board of Trustee Chairperson: _____ Date: _____

Template 3: Interview Record Form

Use this form to document each interview conducted as part of an investigation.

Case Reference:

Interviewee Name:

Role/Relationship to Case:

Date and Time of Interview:

Location / Format (in-person, online):

Interviewer(s):

Support Person Present:

Summary of Key Statements / Observations:

Emotional State of Interviewee:

Signatures (Interviewer / Interviewee):

Template 4: Outcome Summary Template

To be completed after the investigation concludes, summarizing findings, decisions, and follow-up actions.

Case Reference:

Date Investigation Closed:

Findings Summary:

Determination (Substantiated / Unsubstantiated / Inconclusive):

Key Relevant Points to support Determination:

Disciplinary or Remedial Actions Recommended:

Support Provided to Complainant:

Actions to Prevent Recurrence:

Board / Committee Sign-off:

Template 5: Confidentiality and Non-Retaliation Agreement

All individuals participating in or aware of a safeguarding investigation must sign this agreement to protect the privacy, integrity, and safety of all parties involved.

I acknowledge that:

1. Information shared with me during or about this investigation is confidential and will not be disclosed without authorization.
2. Retaliation against any individual for reporting or participating in the investigation is strictly prohibited.
3. Breach of this agreement may result in disciplinary or legal consequences.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Role / Position: _____