



MCC's Safeguarding Approach

Introduction¹

MCC's commitment to preventing and responding to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment is rooted in its mission as "a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches" that "shares God's love and compassion for all in the name of Christ by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice." Until 2018, MCC's safeguarding work had largely focused on child safeguarding by supporting partners who worked with minors with tools and resources to ensure their programs and operations were safe for children. Internally, MCC also worked to improve its support for staff who experienced sexual violence. In 2018, with the renewed global call for organizations to extend protections for everyone who interacts with an organization, MCC began revising its policies to include the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (PSEAH), including an expanded PSEAH and child protection policy framework that was approved by MCC's boards in 2019.

Since then, MCC has taken a hard and long look inward, recognizing that we have much work to do to strengthen our own systems for prevention and survivor-centered response. This work has included:

- creating a safeguarding standing committee and dedicated safeguarding staff positions;
- developing and improving safeguarding and related policies;



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- documenting and standardizing MCC's response procedures when concerns about SEAH are reported;
- developing tools for programs to use with partners in analyzing and mitigating safeguarding risks in projects;
- surveying staff about barriers to reporting abuses of power;
- improving and expanding MCC's reporting mechanisms to make them more accessible and safe; and
- developing staff training about abuses of power and how to report them.

¹ Note, the text from the *Introduction and Key Takeaways* in this document come directly from: MCC 2023: "Intersections: MCC theory and practice quarterly", 2023, Volume 11, Issue 4. <https://mcc.org/media/document/130359>

MCC has also identified and trained a network of safeguarding focal points who work within each MCC program to support implementation of MCC's safeguarding policy. While their safeguarding responsibilities are just one part of their jobs, focal points play an important role accompanying and training partners and serving as a resource on safeguarding for other staff.

MCC Case studies

The articles below explore approaches to working with partners on safeguarding and were originally published in 'Intersections: MCC theory and practice quarterly' which is published by Mennonite Central Committee's Planning, Learning and Disaster Response Department. 'Intersections: MCC theory and practice quarterly' can be accessed online at www.mcc.org. This edition was compiled in 2023 by Meara Kwee, an MCC safeguarding coordinator in the Planning, Learning and Disaster Response department, based in Pennsylvania.

Articles from the United States and Mexico discuss ways that MCC programs are accompanying partners and navigating power dynamics and silence around sexual abuse.

- **Progress over perfect: a collaborative approach to safeguarding within MCC's Summer Service program** by Abby Endashaw²
- **Challenges and opportunities in safeguarding work with churches in Mexico** by Ruhama Pedroza García³
- Articles from Democratic Republic of Congo, Cambodia, Haiti and Lebanon, Syria and Iraq address safeguarding with individuals and communities that have specific vulnerabilities to SEAH, including people with disabilities and those facing humanitarian crises.
- **Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and safeguarding the rights of displaced people in DR Congo** by Jacob Sankara⁴
- **Disability, safeguarding and inclusion in Cambodia** by Charles Conklin⁵
- **Preventing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment after the 2021 earthquake in Haiti** by Muriel Chaperon⁶
- **Addressing the complex challenges of PSEAH in crisis settings in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq** by Dana Dia⁷
- Finally, the articles from Uganda and Bolivia discuss the challenges and opportunities of using safeguarding tools with partners in contextually and culturally appropriate ways.
- **Lessons from using MCC's partner safeguarding assessment tool in Uganda and Bolivia** by Betty Bobo, Semei Kakungulu, Leidy Muñoz and Nathan Toews⁸

2 See MCC 2023, Pages 3-5.

3 See MCC 2023, Pages 5-8.

4 See MCC 2022: "Intersections: MCC theory and practice quarterly", 2022, Volume 10, Issue 2, Pages 9-11 <https://mcc.org/media/document/1144>

5 See MCC 2023, Pages 8-10.

6 See MCC 2023, Pages 10-11.

7 See MCC 2023, Pages 11-13.

8 See MCC 2023, Pages 13-16.

Key takeaways:

To do safeguarding well takes more than developing policies and providing staff training. It requires a shift in organizational culture, with leaders modeling transparency and accountability, inviting staff to report concerns and putting steps in place to protect reporters from retaliation. Doing safeguarding work well means that organizations allocate sufficient resources so that survivors feel supported and safe and that safeguarding staff and focal points feel empowered to do their work. It requires true accountability to the communities an organization seeks to serve. It demands that MCC invites program participants to participate fully in identifying safeguarding risks and mitigation strategies. Finally, doing safeguarding work well requires that organizations address the underlying power inequalities that create the conditions for SEAH to occur.

MCC is on a journey to be a safe organization for everyone who interacts with MCC in any capacity. We are committed to accompanying and supporting our partners in their commitments to safeguarding. While our efforts are far from perfect, we are striving to address our own power, learn from our partners and adjust our efforts as we learn. Safeguarding is a long journey, and it will take considerable collaboration, time, resources, energy and, most of all, hope.



Digna, The Canadian Centre of Expertise on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment, is a Program of Cooperation Canada



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