

VCGS Code of Conduct

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Advice and support

Please contact the People & Culture team for further advice or support: peopleandculture@mcri.edu.au

Purpose

This document sets out the Code of Conduct of Victorian Clinical Genetics Services (**VCGS**).

Our Code of Conduct:

- sets out the standards of behaviour we expect from everyone who works or studies with us
- helps us act ethically, respectfully, and responsibly
- ensures all people behave in a way that promotes public confidence and trust in VCGS.

About this Code of Conduct

VCGS is a wholly owned subsidiary of Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI). As part of the MCRI family, VCGS staff benefit from and are supported by the broader policies, procedures and resources that apply across our organisation.

This Code of Conduct is specific to VCGS and reflects our unique purpose, strategy and values. **However, all MCRI policies and procedures apply to VCGS staff.** This ensures consistency, support and shared standards as we work together to improve health outcomes for children and families.

1. Scope

The Code of Conduct applies to:

1.1. all VCGS employees; and

- all volunteers, students, honorary and affiliate appointments.

2. Core Principles and Responsibilities

Following the Code of Conduct is mandatory. It applies every day and to every one of us, including Board Members, Executives, Employees and Contractors.

All people at VCGS are expected to:

1.2. Read the Code of Conduct. Understand your obligations and understand how the Code impacts you, your role and the way you behave and represent VCGS.

- **Act ethically and responsibly.** Uphold integrity, honesty, fairness, and respect in all interactions.
- **Comply with all laws and policies.** Follow legislation, awards, enterprise agreements, and all internal policies and procedures, including mandatory training.
- **Promote a positive workplace.** Demonstrate our values and foster trust, inclusion, and psychological safety.

1.3. Protect people and assets. Safeguard the safety, health, intellectual property, and information of VCGS.

- **Speak up.** Report concerns about breaches of the Code, unethical conduct, or unsafe practices.

It is important that you take personal responsibility for the following Code of Conduct and question something that doesn't feel right or doesn't align to our values.

3. Our Vision, Purpose, and Strategy

Guided by **our vision to make genetics and genomics universally accessible for lifelong health, our purpose is to deliver exceptional care and services while shaping the future of genetics and genomics in Australia.** Our vision and purpose are the reasons we exist and guide the way we work to shape the future of genetics and genomics.

To help meet our long-term goals, we have four strategic priorities. These ensure we have the right focus and investment across VCGS to deliver on our vision and purpose.

Our people

Cultivate a supportive space for global genomics talent to learn

Impactful service

Deliver exceptional care that empowers and supports choice and informed decision making.

Innovation

Lead the way by pushing boundaries and redefining genomic healthcare.

Research excellence

Translate discoveries that shape the future of global genomics.

The Code of Conduct links our purpose, strategy, values and behaviours and sets out our expectations for how we act, solve problems and make decisions. **Everything we do should be guided by a commitment to advancing our strategic priorities.** This is how we turn our purpose into real impact.

4. Our Values and Behaviours

Our four values are intrinsic to our purpose and the success of our strategy, and they come to life through the actions we take, how we behave, and the decisions we make. Living these values everyday will help build an inclusive and safe culture.

Underpinning each value is a set of behaviours which guide the way we work together. **VCGS team members must demonstrate VCGS's values and behaviours at all times.**



Value people first

People are at the core of our business. We lead with empathy. We display compassion and respect towards each other, our patients and the community.



Build trust

We communicate and act with transparency, sincerity and truthfulness in all aspects of our work



Pursue excellence

We share a commitment to delivering high-quality, sustainable science and services. We acknowledge mistakes and encourage each other to learn and grow.



Be innovative

We encourage curiosity, collaboration and critical thinking. We value new ideas, and continuous improvement.

The behaviours aligned to each value can be found in the Code on page 6 and 7.

5. Our Code of Conduct

Following the Code of Conduct is mandatory. It applies every day and to every one of us, including Board Members, Executives, Employees and Contractors. The below table outlines the expectations of employment at VCGS. We all share a responsibility to act in accordance with our Code and make ethical decisions.

In addition to outlining our key principles, our Code includes a column with relevant policies and guidelines to help you answer any questions and know how and when to act or speak up.

Principle	Requirement	Relevant Policies and Guidelines
SAFETY AND EQUITY VCGS is committed to creating an inclusive, safe and equitable environment for everyone. All our people must uphold the below principles and guidelines.		
Zero Tolerance for inappropriate behaviour	- Do not discriminate against anyone based on race, religion, gender, nationality, age, disability, sexual orientation or other attributes. - Do not engage in or tolerate racism, discrimination or bias of any kind. - Do not bully, intimidate, or behave unreasonably towards others. - Do not harass or make offensive or humiliating remarks to anyone. - Do not engage in sexual harassment or any behaviour based on sex or gender discrimination. - Do not ignore or condone behaviours that undermine a safe, inclusive and respectful environment.	- Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy - Sexual Harassment, Sex-Based Harassment and Sex Discrimination Policy Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Gender and Diversity Policy
Prevention of inappropriate behaviour	- Speak up and stand against inappropriate behaviour or discrimination whenever it occurs. - Actively challenge and respond to incidents of racism or discrimination, demonstrating a commitment to a welcoming and inclusive environment.	Disability Equity Policy

Principle	Requirement	Relevant Policies and Guidelines
	• Support colleagues and children who may be affected by harmful behaviour. • Report incidents of inappropriate behaviour promptly.	
Prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment	• Do not engage in or tolerate sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment in any form. • Report all concerns or incidents immediately. • Maintain confidentiality and respect the rights and wishes of victim/survivors. • Identify and challenge power imbalances and abuse of authority. • Engage in and support ongoing training and awareness on PSEAH standards.	
Inclusion of all our people	• Model respectful, inclusive and positive behaviour in all interactions to set a strong example. • Promote awareness and understanding around diversity, respect, inclusion and anti-racism. • Treat everyone with respect and fairness regardless of gender or background. • Follow established policies and procedures when addressing concerns or resolving issues, ensuring fairness for all involved.	
PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR <i>VCGS promotes a professional environment based on our values. Our values shape how we behave, treat other people and make decisions with clarity. All our people must demonstrate VCGS’s values and behaviours at all times.</i>		
Value people first	• Demonstrate empathy in all interactions with colleagues, patients and community members. • Show compassion and respect consistently, ensuring a welcoming and inclusive environment. • Prioritise the needs and wellbeing of others in decision-making and daily work.	• Strategy House

Principle	Requirement	Relevant Policies and Guidelines
Pursue excellence	- Strive to deliver high-quality, sustainable services and solutions at all times. - Acknowledge mistakes openly and view them as opportunities for learning and improvement - Commit to continuous growth by seeking feedback and embracing development opportunities.	
Build trust	- Communicate with transparency, sincerity and honesty in all interactions. - Follow through on promises and responsibilities to build confidence with others. - Act with integrity and ensure your actions align with our values and ethical standards.	
Be innovative	- Approach challenges with curiosity and open-mindedness. - Collaborate with others to generate new ideas and solutions. - Foster an environment of continuous improvement by seeking and implementing innovative practices.	
CHILD SAFETY <i>Our purpose is to give all children the opportunity to live a healthy and fulfilled life, this involves actively keeping children and young people safe from abuse and neglect. All our people must prioritise child safety and abide by our zero-tolerance policy.</i>		
Uphold Child Safe Standards	- Abide by the Child Safety Policy and Procedure. - Comply with all relevant legislation, including labour laws. - Identify and reduce risks to children. - Immediately report child harm or abuse according to Australian legislation and VCGS policies.	Child Safety Policy Child Safety Procedure 2025 Child Safe Standards Children, Youth and Families

Principle	Requirement	Relevant Policies and Guidelines
Seek to Do No Harm	• Prioritise the best interests of children and young people. • Do not exploit or harm children or engage in any form of prohibited sexual conduct. • Demonstrate appropriate personal and professional boundaries.	Act 2005 • Crimes Act 1914 • Criminal Code Act 1995
Respect for children and their families	• Create a welcoming environment where children and families feel safe and can participate. • Communicate with children using accessible, child friendly language. • Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of all children.	• DFAT Child Protection Policy • ACFID Code of Conduct • United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
HEALTH AND WELLBEING VCGS is committed to ensuring the health and wellbeing of everyone. It is expected that all people prioritise health and wellbeing to create a safe workplace.		
Act Responsibly with alcohol and drugs	• Do not use intoxicating, addictive or illegal drugs while working in or visiting VCGS. • Use alcohol and substances responsibly outside of work so they don't harm your health or affect your ability to do your job. • Do not endanger the health and safety of others with alcohol or drugs.	• Alcohol and Drugs Policy • Environmental Health and Safety Policy
Take Care for your health and safety at work	• Take care for your own health and safety. • Consider the health and safety of others. • Follow the VCGS's safety and security directives. • Do not intentionally or recklessly interfere with health, safety or welfare initiatives.	• Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

Principle	Requirement	Relevant Policies and Guidelines
RESOURCES AND PROPERTY <i>VCGS manages its resources and property carefully to support our goals. All our people must prioritise responsible use and safeguarding of these assets.</i>		
Responsible Management of VCGS resources	☐ Use VCGS’s resources wisely and responsibly. Avoid waste or unnecessary spending. ☐ Do not commit or support any form of fraud or dishonesty. ☐ Do not engage in or support any form of corruption, including bribery, or misuse your position for personal gain. ☐ Do not steal or take anything that does not belong to you. ☐ Follow procedures for using equipment, supplies, and other resources properly. ☐ Report any suspicions of fraud or misuse of resources immediately.	• Financial Management Framework • Fraud, Corruption and other Losses Prevention Policy & Framework • Procurement Policy • Intellectual Property Policy
Protect our workplace and intellectual property	• Use VCGS information and resources only for work-related purpose. • Do not share or give access to our information systems or data to anyone who is not authorised. • Keep passwords secure and change them regularly to prevent unauthorised access. • Do not access or use information that you are not authorised to see or use. • Be careful to protect any valuable ideas, inventions or information created during work. • Follow the VCGS’s policies on intellectual property and seek approval from the Director of Innovation if unsure about rights or ownership. • Do not take improper advantage of official information gained in the course of employment.	
POSITIVE PUBLIC IMAGE <i>The VCGS strives to main a strong, positive reputation. All our people must prioritise representing the VCGS with honesty and professionalism to uphold public trust.</i>		
Practice Responsible Communication	• Do not speak publicly about issues that affect VCGS unless approved by the Director and Chief Operating Officer	• Media Policy

Principle	Requirement	Relevant Policies and Guidelines
	- Always provide accurate and consistent information when talking to the public. - Do not use VCGS's name, logos, branding or trademarks without approval.	Social Media Policy
Maintain a Professional Reputation	- Be careful about how you show your connection to VCGS on social media or public profiles. - Do not share confidential information about VCGS on social media. - Do not post information, comments or materials that has the potential to damage your reputation in such a way that continuing your association with VCGS would bring us into disrepute. - Do not post mean, disrespectful or unfair comments about employees, contractors or volunteers at VCGS.	
RESEARCH INTEGRITY VCGS conducts research responsibly, ethically and with integrity. All our people must adhere to the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research 2018 (the Code) and related guides.		
Honesty in the development, undertaking and reporting of research	Present information truthfully and accurately in proposing, conducting and reporting research.	MCRI Authorship Guide Conflict of Interest Policy Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research Framework for Handling and Resolving Breaches of the
Rigour in the development, undertaking and reporting of research	Underpin research by attention to detail and robust methodology, avoiding or acknowledging biases.	
Transparency in declaring interests and reporting research methodology, data and findings	- Share and communicate research methodology, data and findings openly, responsibly and accurately. - Disclose and manage conflicts of interest.	

Principle	Requirement	Relevant Policies and Guidelines
Fairness in the treatment of others	• Treat fellow researchers and others involved in the research fairly and with respect. • Appropriately reference and cite the work of others. • Give credit, including authorship where appropriate, to those who have contributed to the research.	NHMRC Code and Scientific Misconduct at RCH and MCRI
Respect for research participants, the wider community, animals and the environment	• Treat human participants and communities that are affected by the research with care and respect, giving appropriate consideration to the needs of minority groups or vulnerable people. • Ensure that respect underpins all decisions and actions related to the care and use of animals in research. • Minimise adverse effects of the research on the environment.	
Recognition of the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be engaged in research that affects or is of particular significance to them	• Recognise, value and respect the diversity, heritage, knowledge, cultural property and connection to land of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. • Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prior to research being undertaken, so that they freely make decisions about their involvement. • Report to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the outcomes of research in which they have engaged.	
Accountability for the development, undertaking and reporting of research	• Comply with relevant legislation, policies and guidelines. • Ensure good stewardship of public resources used to conduct research. • Consider the consequences and outcomes of research prior to its communication.	
Promotion of responsible research practices	• Promote and foster a research culture and environment that supports the responsible conduct of research.	

If faced with a difficult situation, ask yourself:

- Are my actions consistent with the law, the VCGS's Code of Conduct and policies?
- What would my advice to a friend or other colleague be?
- What might other people think of my actions?
- How might it look on the front page of the newspaper?

If you are uncomfortable with any of these answers, you should seek advice before acting.

It is up to every one of us to make sure we adhere to the Code of Conduct and other VCGS policies and comply with all applicable laws.

If you are in a situation and are not sure what to do, or if you see something that might break the law or breach the Code or any of our other policies, you should speak to your People Leader, a more senior leader, or anyone from the People and Culture team.

Our [Whistleblower Policy](#) enables and encourages people to raise concerns about any wrongdoing involving VCGS without fear of reprisal. You can access the whistleblower service anonymously through any of the methods below. You can be assured that any reports will be treated confidentially and taken seriously.

- **By Phone:** 1300 687 927
- **By Email:**
- **Online:** www.whistleblowingservice.com.au/mcri/
Reference Number: 2022mcri
Company Name: MCRI
Unique Key: MCRI

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The Code of Conduct is mandatory for all employees, representatives and contractors. However, there are some additional responsibilities and requirements for People Leaders and relevant teams.

ALL EMPLOYEES, REPRESENTATIVES & CONTRACTORS	PEOPLE LEADERS	PEOPLE & CULTURE TEAM	EXECUTIVE & BOARD
• Always follow our Code of Conduct. • Do not engage in unlawful conduct. • Report any breaches of the Code. • Acknowledge this Policy and complete all related training.	• Lead by example and inspire behaviour aligned to our Code. • Keep an open door to your team to answer any questions or concerns about the Code or any other process, procedure or policy. • Foster a culture of trust and transparency by making it clear that people can come to you for guidance, support or to make a report. • Monitor the workplace for safety and respect. • Provide a safe and positive workplace and make sure people are not exposed to health and safety risks. • Take all reports seriously and respond quickly. • Contact the People and Culture Team to report unlawful conduct.	• Investigate reports fairly and privately. • Help People Leaders to handle reports. • Help People Leaders report critical incidents confidentially to the Board and/or external funding bodies as required.	• Lead by example and inspire behaviour aligned to our Code. • Provide a safe and positive workplace and make sure people are not exposed to health and safety risks. • Work to eliminate unlawful and inappropriate behaviour.

7. Version History

Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Changes (if relevant)	