



Western Cape Street Children's Forum

CODE OF CONDUCT

WCSCF MISSION

The WCSCF is a network of organisations working together, and in partnership with other stakeholders and sectors, to create a coordinated, empowered, integrated and collaborative approach towards children living, working and begging on the street. This is done through the following activities:

- Networking to build inter-sectoral partnerships
- Strengthening the capacity of sector organisations
- Lobbying and advocacy – engaging social, community and economic factors that harm or exploit children through collective representation

WCSCF VALUES

- Respect, protect, promote and fulfil the child's rights set out in the Bill of rights and the Children's Act – encompasses in the Best interests of the child standard.
- We seek to protect all street and vulnerable children from exploitation and abuse.

- Open and equal access to information
- Collaboration
- Promotion of Member organisations and their activities

A Code of Conduct refers to the ethics, principles, norms and standards for the guidance and conduct of its services, its activities and its internal and external communication. These are guided by the Forum's values. Organisational conduct and ethics is reflected in the behaviour and attitudes of its committee, employees, members and participants.

Being that the purpose of the Forum is to provide a platform for frank discussion of and networking about of all matters pertaining to the work of members, members must feel safe in these discussions and have a right to give opinions and present opposing views.

While the Forum deals with political matters, discussions among Forum members to inform decisions must be conducted in a manner conducive to discussion. While members may have vested interests in the viewpoint they present, and may lobby other members for support, bullying tactics used in other settings, such as business or parliament, are not welcome in Forum meetings.

This Code aims to provide a guide to indicate the standards of conduct and ethics of members and participants of the WCSCF as well as the fiduciary responsibilities, legal and governance requirements for the Committee Members of the WCSCF. The code will enable accountability and define relationships within the Forum.

Ethical Behaviour and Conduct

1. Members or participants should always act in the best interests of the WCSCF and the Street Children Sector.
2. In all dealings with one another and with other members of the Forum, participants should do so with courtesy and respect.
3. No member at a meeting shall display sexism, racism, or any other form of discrimination towards any other member, committee member, employees, participants, volunteers or other person.
4. Minorities are regarded as important as majorities and efforts to hear a minority viewpoint must be made.
5. Networking by nature makes allowances for differing opinions as long as the primary objective is to further understand, learn from and devise a way of cooperating. Items put on the table for discussion should be debated with respect even if another member does not think the item has any merit or if another member does not agree with the view being put forward.
6. Forum members may with the Chairs permission interrupt a speaker to ask questions or make comments as necessary to clarify the discussion.
7. Undue interruption or other interference with the orderly conduct of a meeting will not be tolerated and may result in the individual(s) being asked to leave the meeting.
8. Heckling, making threats, name calling, insulting are not conducive to constructive debate and go against the ethos of networking.
9. Defamatory remarks or profanity will not be allowed. The Forum Chairperson may terminate a speaker's privilege of address if he/she persists in improper conduct or remarks.
10. The Executive Committee can undertake any action to ensure that this atmosphere prevails.
11. The Forum Chairperson may rule members or participants out of order if their remarks do not pertain to matters that are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Forum or if their remarks are unduly repetitive.
12. The suspension of the membership of a Forum member must be agreed to by the majority of the committee.

Behaviour at meetings by Members or Participants should:

13. Be courteous and respectful at all times
14. Be positive and polite.
15. Be careful of what they say and how they say it.
16. Acknowledge contributions - don't only criticize.
17. Take responsibility for their actions
18. Be tolerant of different views.
19. Be ethical.
20. Be punctual to start on time.
21. Allowed for disagreements, but disagreements should focus on professional matters, the impact on our work, our approaches. The Forum meeting is not the place to deal with personal conflicts.
22. Tackle the issue not the person.
23. Involve rational decision making.

24. Stick to the business at hand - Don't talk just for the sake of it, talk to contribute, talk with a purpose.
25. Ask questions to obtain clarity when one genuinely doesn't understand, not just to attack or judge.
26. Maintain confidentiality.
27. Involve participative decision making.
28. Involve commitment.
29. If someone has a disagreement with another, approach him or her directly. Don't wait for the meeting and then do this in public as this is humiliating and insulting.

Complaints Procedure

1. The Forum shall not prohibit public criticism of its policies, procedures, programs, services, acts or omissions (Constitution Code section).
2. The Forum shall not prohibit public criticism of Forum employees or Members.
3. Complaints or charges against an Employee or a Member should be made in writing or in a closed session, but without resorting to defamatory language. Complaints should be specific including examples
4. Whenever a Member of the forum or the public makes specific complaints or charges against an Employee or a Member while addressing the Forum, the Forum Chairperson shall inform the speaker that it is the preference of the Forum to receive such complaints in writing, or to hear such complaints or charges in closed session unless otherwise requested by the member pursuant to Constitution Code section...)
5. The presentation of such complaints or charges to the Forum by a recognized speaker shall not alone be grounds for declaring the speaker out of order.

Code for Executive Committee Members

“Governance is about leadership. Leadership through efficiency, quality, confidence, responsibility, transparency and accountability.”

Committee Members of the WCSCF owe a fiduciary duty to the WCSCF, which means showing loyalty, diligence and dedication to the Forum’s best interests. Actions of Committee Members should promote and protect the reputation of the Forum and the trust and confidence of those with whom the Forum networks.

Committee Members are elected and appointed at the WCSCF Annual General Meeting. The Committee will elect office bearers such as Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary and a Treasurer. Members are nominated and a vote is taken. The appointment is for a one year period. Members may be re-elected thereafter. Committee Members may resign at any time by giving notice in writing to the Chairperson. The Committee should then declare the office vacant.

Committee Members are expected to adhere to the following standards in line with the King report II:

- Accountability
- Honesty
- Openness
- Responsibility
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Leadership

Executive Committee Members have roles, rights and responsibilities.

Roles and responsibilities are to contribute in the following main areas:

- Attend and participate in WCSCF Committee Meetings
- Attend and participate in WCSCF key functions and meetings
- Contribute to decisions taken in the Committee
- Familiarise oneself with the social context within which the WCSCF operates
- Support WCSCF functioning through the provision of an enabling environment.

Rights include the access to information, access to relevant resources. Responsibilities include working as a team with other members and other stakeholders, such as government, the community, business, the media, etc, in shaping the future of the network. Responsibilities also include supporting each other and the network employees, and representing the institution with integrity in all external contacts. This implies, for example, that once decisions have been made, all executive members are bound by these decisions.