

**TORONTO REFUGEE COMMUNITY NON-PROFIT
HOMES AND SERVICES - ROMERO HOUSE**



CODE OF CONDUCT

Approved by the Board of Directors:

April 16, 2018

Date

Chair of the Board:


Signature

This policy replaces previous policy signed on November 24, 2008

Code of Conduct

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1. Preamble

Romero House, known legally as the Toronto Refugee Community Non-Profit Homes and Services, provides resettlement services to refugees by providing basic housing, support and resources. The Board of Directors, staff, interns, volunteers and contractors seek to help refugees feel comfortable and to support them in the long journey towards gaining landed status and, eventually, Canadian citizenship.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to outline how the Board of Directors, staff, interns, volunteers and contractors conduct ourselves:

- with the refugees that we serve;
- with each other; and
- within the organization of Romero House.

3. Definitions

- i. Staff: refers to the salaried people who deliver a service at Romero House, and have established a continual/legal relationship with Romero House with the following positions: Director, Assistant Director, Administration and Finance Manager, Building and Maintenance Manager, and other possible salaried positions in the future.
- ii. Volunteer: refers to a person who delivers a service or fulfils a duty at Romero House on an occasional or regular basis without financial compensation.
- iii. Intern: refers to a person who delivers a service or fulfils a duty at Romero House full time and receives a stipend and who has been accepted into the internship program.

Board of Directors Member: refers to a person who has been elected or appointed to oversee the activities of Romero House, and who sits on the Board of Directors.

- iv. Resident: A person who has signed a Romero House lease and rental agreement, and who enjoys all the rights and responsibilities of tenancy¹.
- v. Contractor: A person who delivers a service or fulfils a duty with regular hours and who is paid regularly.

¹ Resident- For the purposes of this document, a resident also refers to any and all persons listed on a Romero House lease, who are referred to in other documents as “occupants”.

vi. Community member: A person who used be a resident at Romero House.

4. Expectations of how we conduct ourselves with the refugees we serve

a. General

- i. We believe that the refugees who come to Romero House are, in some profound way, our brothers and sisters. Each one has an inherent dignity and is of infinite value. Together we are part of the human family. It is because of this that we have chosen to welcome the stranger who comes to the door of our lives.
- ii. We trust in the inner strength and courage of each refugee. We act on the belief that each one of them desires truth and goodness, justice and love. We rely on what is best in them and in ourselves. Thus, we greet refugees with trust rather than with suspicion. We respect the integrity of each refugee.
- iii. We have no desire to act as judges with the refugees or with each other. There are so many people and agencies that stand in judgment over human beings in this society. Romero House is a place where we attempt to live and act with a minimum amount of judgment. We realize that refugee claimants are at a very vulnerable point in their lives. They are not always able to respond in ways that they have been able to, or will be able to in the future. Nevertheless, we will not shrink from making judgments if we see that someone is not acting as a good neighbour. We celebrate moments of strength and conviction.
- iv. There are things that we can and must do for the refugees that they cannot do for themselves when they first arrive. However, it is far more important that in the work that we do with the refugees that we engage in each other's lives as equals. We do not want to walk for the refugees but with them for a little while, so they can eventually walk on their own two feet.
- v. We try to do our work for the refugees with as much competence as possible. In this culture, competence is often associated with a high salary. We choose to do the very best job possible, not because we are paid to do so but because human beings deserve nothing less.
- vi. We choose to live simply so that things don't get in the way of our relationships with our neighbours.
- vii. In each situation we ask ourselves "What would a good neighbour do?" "What would be the most loving response?"

5. Expectations of how we conduct ourselves

b. General

- i. Staff, interns, volunteers and contractors at Romero House consciously try to work together as a team in order to ensure a consistency of approach. We also try to work responsibly as each of these parties is acting in the name of Romero House, during regular office hours, or at Romero House-related activities outside regular office hours. Legally and morally, the Board is responsible for everything that staff, interns, volunteers and contractors do (according to Supreme Court of Canada). The Board has entrusted its staff, interns, volunteers and contractors with a great deal of responsibility and they must honour this trust.
- ii. At the same time, we all have to do some things that we would rather not. It just has to be done and we all do our share of these tasks. Ask yourself if you can do the work before asking someone else to do it.
- iii. We must keep our work areas clean and pleasant. All must do their part in ensuring this.
- iv. We must maintain a personal appearance consistent with a constructive and positive work environment.
- v. We know that the work at Romero House is demanding and fatiguing, and we try not to judge one another in moments of weakness.
- vi. We must refrain from gossip or other forms of negative communication.
- vii. All initiatives suggested by staff, interns, volunteers, contractors are welcomed, but final decisions in important matters must rest with the Director and/or the Board, as it is they who must take responsibility for them. If staff, interns, volunteers or contractors are unsure about what to do in a situation, please ask for advice from the Director. This is not a sign of weakness but rather a sign of wisdom.
- viii. If something prevents staff, intern, volunteer, or contractor from coming to work, or following up with a commitment, use common courtesy by advising your superior and or your colleagues with anticipation if possible.
- ix. In each situation we ask ourselves “What would a good neighbour do?” “What would be the most loving response.”

b. Confidentiality

We do not ask the refugees we serve to tell us about themselves except as is necessary in the refugee claimant process. We respect their right to tell us what they want to about their own past. They are under no obligation to trust us. Romero House is one place where they will not be forced to explain themselves. Nevertheless, we are ready to listen to whatever the refugees want to tell us. We will respect their confidence and their right to confidentiality.

All staff, interns, volunteers and contractors are required to sign a confidentiality agreement (required by Canadian law) in order to ensure the privacy of the people we serve. Over and above these legal requirements, we take it as our moral responsibility to respect the privacy of each person. So, for example, we discuss any personal matters on a “need to know” basis. We try to ensure all files are returned to the filing cabinet and we do not discuss the particulars of a refugee's situation with other residents or with those outside of the community.

“Confidential information” refers to information not in the public domain of which the staff, Intern, volunteer, contractor or board member becomes aware during the course of doing their work. Please see the Confidentiality and Privacy Policy for more on this.

c. Non-Discrimination

All Staff ,Interns, volunteers, contractors and board members shall know, understand, agree and enact the Non-discrimination practices of Romero House. This refers to any verbal, psychological, or physical intimidation, innuendo and actions based on a person’s race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ancestry, age, ability, and family status. Prohibition of this behaviour pertains to all interactions at Romero House – between staff, interns, volunteers, board members, contractors, residents, former residents, or other people Romero House serves or interacts with. Romero House as an organization does not tolerate this behaviour and municipal, provincial, and federal laws prohibit this behaviour.

In general, we will respect different religions, cultures and races at Romero House. Indeed, we want to celebrate the possibility of building a community that values differences. We want to include everyone in our universe of care and concern without demanding that they become “like us”. We chose to live out the meaning of our religious beliefs with our actions more than our words.

d. Conflict of Interest

All staff, interns, volunteers, contractors and board members must sign the conflict of interest declaration in the case of a conflict of interest.

It is the policy of the organization to prohibit its staff, interns, volunteers, contractors and board members from engaging in any activity, practice, or act which conflicts with, or appears to conflict with, the interest of the organization, its policies, or those it serves. Since it is impossible to describe all of the situations that may cause or give the appearance

of a conflict of interest, prohibitions are not intended to be exhaustive and only include some of the more clear examples (see Conflict of Interest Policy/Bylaw #2).

Staff, interns, volunteers, contractors and board members are expected to represent Romero House in a positive and ethical manner and have an obligation both to avoid conflicts of interest and to refer questions and concerns about potential conflicts to their proxy supervisor. Employment and volunteer commitments with Romero House is at the mutual consent of the organization, staff, interns, volunteers, contractors and board members; either party may terminate that relationship at any time with advanced notice (time to be measured in relation to the situation).

e. Advertising

Staff, Interns, volunteers, contractors and board members shall not engage in any advertising or business solicitation activities with respect to services that he/she knows or should know are false or misleading. "Advertising" encompasses all communications by whatever medium, including oral communications, which may directly or indirectly influence any person or organization to decide whether there is a need for professional services or to select a specific person or firm to perform such services.

f. Computer Equipment, Email, Internet Access & Electronic Documents

Computers in the downstairs office and in the Director's office are only for the use of interns, staff and designated contractors, as indicated by the Director. As there is confidential information on all of these computers, no exceptions can be made to this rule unless a staff, intern or designated contractor is working with the person. They should, instead, be directed towards the public computers on the first floor of the Centre. Office computers can be used for personal matters by interns but only outside of the regular office hours.

Romero House treats all information transmitted through or stored on its computer system and on any computer owned by Romero House, including e-mail messages and Internet communications, as the property of the organization. The information is not the private property of employees. In addition, the electronic information that is in the possession of employees at the office or at home must be returned to Romero House before staff, interns, volunteers, contractors, or board members cease their formal relationship with Romero House.

Staff, interns, volunteers, contractors and board members should avoid using work computers, phones, and/or internet access to view or disseminate material not related to work matters, or using such tools in a way that negatively affects one's abilities to carry out tasks and duties.

g. Participation in Political Activities

All Staff, Interns, volunteers, contractors and board members shall know, understand, agree to the City of Toronto Policy on Political Activities as adopted by Romero House.

h. Prohibited Grounds

Breach of any of the following by a board member, staff, intern, volunteer, or contractor may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination:

- i. using language which may be deemed to be abusive, demeaning, or derogatory to a resident, intern, staff, board member, volunteer, contractor or community member;
- ii. endangering the well being of a resident, intern, staff, board member, volunteer, contractor or community member;
- iii. abusing or destroying the property of a resident, intern, staff, board member, contractor or volunteer of Romero House;
- iv. smoking in prohibited places;
- v. coming to the office or a work function while under the influence of intoxicants (e.g. alcohol, marijuana, illicit drugs);
- vi. reporting to work in a truent or late fashion, or not giving proper advance notice whenever unable to work;
- vii. imposing a personal belief or standard upon a resident, intern, staff, board member, volunteer, contractor or community member;
- viii. engaging in a romantic or sexual relationship with a resident or other refugee currently receiving support from Romero House;
- ix. beginning and engaging in a romantic or sexual relationship with an intern while one participates in the internship program without discussing it with the Director;
- x. exploiting a professional relationship with a resident, intern, staff, board member, volunteer, contractor or community member for personal benefit, gain or gratification;
- xi. using or possessing supplies or equipment of Romero House, a resident, a volunteer, or a community member for personal use without appropriate approval.

i. Compliance

All staff, interns, volunteers, contractors and board member shall be knowledgeable about this Code of Conduct, be kept current with Code revisions and abide by its provisions.

Where the requirements of law or regulation conflict with this Code, the requirements of law or regulation take precedence. They shall also be compliant with all other Romero House policies.

Policy CONFIRMED at a board Meeting on the _____ day of _____, 2018.

c/s

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

***** // End of Policy // *****