



## **WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

Employees are often the first to realize that there may be something seriously wrong within Irida Women's Center. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to Irida. They may also fear harassment or victimization. In these circumstances, it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

Irida Women's Center management is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity, and accountability. In line with that commitment, we expect employees, and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the management's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognized that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

The policy document makes it clear that you can do so without fear of victimization, subsequent discrimination, or disadvantage. This whistle-blowing policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within Irida rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.

The policy applies to all employees and those contractors working for Irida and within Irida's premises, for example, daily wage workers, etc. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with Irida on their own premises.

These procedures are in addition to Irida's Complaint/ Grievance procedures and other statutory reporting procedures. We are responsible for making service users aware of the existence of these procedures.

### **Aims and Scope of this Policy**

This policy aims to:

- Encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about the practice.
- Provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken.
- Ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied.
- Reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimization if you have a reasonable belief that you have made any disclosure in good faith.



There are existing procedures in place to enable you to lodge a grievance relating to your own employment. The whistle-blowing policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. These include:

- Conduct that is an offense or a breach of law
- Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
- Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- Damage to the environment
- The unauthorized use of public funds
- Possible fraud and corruption
- Sexual or physical abuse of clients, or
- Other unethical conduct

Thus, any serious concerns that you have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of officers or employees of Irida or others acting on behalf of the management can be reported under the whistle-blowing policy. This may be about something that:

- Makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience, or the standards you believe Irida subscribes to; or
- Is against Irida's Standing Orders and policies; or
- Falls below established standards of practice; or
- Amounts to improper conduct.

This policy does not replace the corporate complaints/ grievance procedure.

## **Safeguards**

### **Harassment or Victimization**

- Irida Women's Center is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees.
- We as Irida's Center recognize that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what you are saying is true, you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to your employer and those for whom you are providing the service.
- The management will not tolerate any harassment or victimization (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.



- Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect you.

## **Confidentiality**

- All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. At the appropriate time, however, you may need to come forward as a witness.

## **Anonymous Allegations**

- This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible.
- Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the Council.
- In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:
  - The seriousness of the issues raised
  - The credibility of the concern; and
  - The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

## **Untrue allegations**

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you

## **How to raise a concern**

As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your immediate manager/ their superior/line HR. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of malpractice.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Staff who wish to make a written report are invited to use the following format:

- The background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates);
- The reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

The earlier you express the concern the easier it is to take action.

Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.

You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague first and you may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) of you who have had the same experience or concerns.

### **How would Irida Women's Center respond**

- Irida will respond to your concerns. Do not forget that testing out your concerns is not the same as either accepting or rejecting them.
  - Where appropriate, the matters raised may:
  - Be investigated by management, internal audit, or through the disciplinary process
  - Be referred to the police
  - Be referred to the external auditor
  - Form the subject of an independent inquiry.
- In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial inquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The overriding principle, that the organization will have in mind, is the public interest.
- Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.
- Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the responsible person will write to you:
  - Acknowledging that the concern has been received
  - Indicating how we propose to deal with the matter
  - Giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
  - Telling you whether any initial inquiries have been made
  - Supplying you with information on staff support mechanisms, and
  - Telling you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.
- If you do intend to raise the matter outside the organization, you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information and need to verify the same with the person responsible

### **Responsible Officer**

The Protection & Safeguarding Manager has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. She would maintain the records of concerns raised and the outcome and will report as necessary to the Management.

