



Protecting from Abuse Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 FPMT REGIONAL OFFICE NORTH AMERICA INC. DESCRIPTION

FPMT Regional Office North America Inc. (“FPMT-RONA”) strives to fulfil the FPMT Inc. mission statement, with a particular focus on supporting and serving the FPMT centers, projects, services and study group of North America. All in positions of authority and leadership in FPMT-RONA have signed an acknowledgement to abide by the FPMT Inc. Ethical Policy.

1.2. OUR COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING FROM ABUSE

FPMT-RONA is committed to protecting people who interact with the Regional Office from harm and abuse. We will also ensure that all staff and volunteers work together, in line with this Protecting from Abuse Policy, and act promptly when dealing with allegations or suspicions of abuse or inappropriate behavior.

We acknowledge that children, young people and adults can be the victims of physical, sexual and psychological abuse, and neglect. We accept the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant of Human Rights, which states that everyone is entitled to “all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”. We also concur with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that children should be able to develop their full potential, free from hunger and want, neglect and abuse.

1.3 PROTECTING EVERYONE FROM ABUSE

Everyone associated with FPMT-RONA has a right to be protected from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect and negligent treatment and exploitation, including sexual abuse.

We sometimes use the term ‘safeguarding’ to describe everything we do to keep people safe, protect them from abuse, and act appropriately if anyone has been abused.

Protecting from Abuse is Everybody’s Responsibility

We will work together to prevent and minimize the risk of harm and abuse. If we have concerns that someone is at risk of being abused our first duty is to the individual concerned.

Doing Nothing Is Not an Option

If we know or suspect that someone is at risk, we will respond and ensure our concerns are properly recorded. We will respond according to this Policy and other FPMT-RONA procedures.

1.4 PEOPLE DESIGNATED FOR PROTECTING FROM ABUSE

Each such individual is known as a Designated Protection Person (DPP):

- a) Regional Coordinator
- b) Board Chair

IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS – TELL THE DESIGNATED PROTECTION PERSON

2. CONFIDENTIALITY

FPMT-RONA is committed to respecting the right to confidentiality of everyone at the Regional Office. However sometimes it is necessary to share information to ensure a person's wellbeing. For example, there may be a statutory requirement; or sometimes practical information needs to be shared with the staff and volunteer team. Occasionally, sensitive information may be shared in this way. Such sharing will only include those who need to know and the information necessary to ensure that the person is protected from harm and abuse and that proper processes are followed if they have been harmed.

Under FPMT-RONA's Confidentiality Policy, staff, volunteers, and teachers who are informed that a person may have been abused or be at risk of abuse, or are made aware of circumstances in which someone is at risk, may need to share sensitive information in order to take practical steps to protect the person at risk. These circumstances include:

- If the participant is under 18 and they disclose information that may indicate risk to themselves or other children or young people;
- If an adult discloses past child abuse and it is known that children or young people are currently at risk from the abuser;
- If a staff member, teacher, or volunteer believes that a participant could cause danger to themselves or to others;
- If the participant gives information that indicates that a crime has been committed;
- If the participant gives information that indicates a possible terrorist threat.

Also, refer to 4.2, Working in Partnership with the FPMT Organization.

In any of these cases, the person at risk will be informed that the disclosure they are making may not be kept confidential. If a decision has to be taken to break confidentiality, it will be done only after consultation with both Designated Protection People (unless one/both of them are the subjects of the allegation). Any disclosure will be shared internally or with external agencies as required while respecting the person's privacy as much as possible.

3. PREVENTION

3.1 UNDERSTANDING ABUSE

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or group of people.

Abuse may be single or repeated episodes. It is not only harming somebody; it also includes neglect of their basic needs or failure to protect them from harm.

3.2 HOW WE MIGHT RECOGNIZE SIGNS OF ABUSE

This section considers the different types and patterns of abuse. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list but an illustrative guide as to the sort of behavior which could give rise to a concern regarding abuse.

- **Physical:** including hitting, slapping, pushing, restraining or inappropriate uninvited touching. Intimate partner violence. Self-harm.
- **Psychological and emotional:** including harassment, blaming, humiliation, threats of harm or abandonment, intimidation, verbal abuse and coercion.
- **Financial:** including the illegal or unauthorized use of a person's property, money or other valuables, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance. Modern slavery and human trafficking.
- **Sexual:** such as forcing a person to take part in any sexual activity without informed consent.
- **Discriminatory:** including racist or sexist remarks or comments based on a person's age, race, sex, national origin, disability, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, medical condition or illness; and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment. This also includes stopping someone from being involved in other cultural activity, services or support networks.
- **Institutional:** the collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service, especially to vulnerable people. This includes a failure to ensure the necessary safeguards are in place to protect people and maintain good standards of care in accordance with individual needs, including training of staff, supervision and management, record keeping and liaising with other providers.
- **Misuse of spiritual authority or power.** This can take the form of all of the abuses listed above. Furthermore, all forms of abuse have the potential to cause damage to the individual's emergent spirituality. Holding a spiritual position or role involves differing power relationships and imbalances and these need to be recognized to respect the autonomy or rights of the individual.

Some abuse is *spiritual* abuse because of the context in which it occurs, or where it invokes status as a teacher or someone of higher spiritual authority, or uses religious teachings to coerce or manipulate people into performing behaviors which meet the needs of the abuser rather than those of the individual concerned. In some cases, it may be well intentioned rather than malicious, but nevertheless is harmful, as it overrides the respect of an autonomous individual's right to make informed choices regarding their own lives and spiritual practices, for example due to fear, shame, humiliation, etc.

3.3 HOW MIGHT WE BECOME AWARE OF ABUSE

Concerns about or evidence of abuse can come to us through:

1. A direct disclosure by the person concerned.
2. A complaint or expression of concern by a staff member, a volunteer, another center user, a carer or caregiver, a member of the public, or relative.
3. An observation of the behavior of the person at risk.

3.4 CLEAR PROVISION OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

It is essential that staff, volunteers, and members of the public know who to contact if there are any concerns about abuse at FPMT-RONA. How to access relevant information, including the relevant policies and reporting procedures, together with who to contact must be available on the website (and in the future if there is a physical premises, a suitably-placed notice board).

4. OUR COMMITMENT TO SAFE PRACTICE

4.1 FPMT-RONA IS COMMITTED TO:

- Identifying abuse.
- Responding effectively to concerns and formal complaints.
- Creating a safe space for everyone at FPMT-RONA.
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of our policies, procedures and practices for protecting people.
- Ensuring that our policies, procedures and practices stay up to date with good practice and the law in relation to protecting from harm and abuse.

FPMT-RONA will use various channels for informing everyone about who are the Designated Protection Persons and how to contact them, along with how to access this policy.

Staff, volunteers and facility users are entitled to respect and protection from harm and abuse. We aim to give everyone a positive and rewarding experience.

We recognize that Dharma practice can be a powerful experience that brings underlying issues to the surface. In the event that participation in a FPMT-RONA activity brings underlying issues to the surface, or reveals some form of mental or emotional disability, the Designated Protection Persons may recommend that the participant seek suitable professional support. We aim to respond empathically in such circumstances.

It is important for participants to appreciate the limits of staff and volunteers' role, time, and skills. On some occasions we will suggest that suitable professional support is required.

Statutory and legal responsibilities:

There may be serious incidents involving children under 18, elders over 65, and other 'adults at risk of harm'. In these cases, there may be a statutory or legal requirement to inform the local authority and other relevant agencies to ensure protection from significant harm or abuse.

In the U.S., for example, an 'adult at risk' is defined differently in each state but generally refers to any adult who has a physical or mental condition that substantially impairs his

or her ability to care for his or her needs and who has experienced, is currently experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or financial exploitation.

We recognize that everyone can be vulnerable at times, due to life events. Therefore, this policy covers not only children and adults at risk, but also everyone at FPMT-RONA. However, the response to any incident may vary according to the legal and statutory guidance for different groups and in different locations.

4.2 WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FPMT ORGANIZATION

FPMT-RONA is committed to working in partnership with the FPMT Inc. organization to develop good practice for preventing harm and abuse. This includes adopting FPMT Inc. policies and attending training provided by FPMT Inc.

FPMT-RONA will discuss their local context with the Center Services director at FPMT Inc., in order to consider together where local jurisdiction and practices need to be taken into account and reflected in their policy.

FPMT-RONA will inform the FPMT Inc. Center Services director of any allegations or concerns regarding abuse about any FPMT-RONA staff member or volunteer, and action taken.

FPMT-RONA will inform the FPMT Inc. Teacher Services director of any allegations or concerns regarding abuse about a registered or Tibetan teacher, and action taken.

FPMT-RONA will inform the FPMT International Mahayana Institute (IMI) director of any allegations or concerns regarding abuse about a monk or nun, and action taken.

Reporting to the relevant individual within the FPMT organization will not indicate failure on the part of FPMT-RONA but will rather indicate vigilance and a commitment to protecting from harm and abuse.

5. PRACTICE GUIDANCE

5.1. RECRUITMENT OF WORKERS, TEACHERS AND VOLUNTEERS

Staff and volunteers at FPMT-RONA are in a position of trust. We recognize that it is important that vetting processes are in place to ensure that no one who may pose a risk of abuse or harm is put in such a position.

5.2 CODE OF BEHAVIOR FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

You Must Avoid:

- ❖ Spending time alone or making unnecessary physical contact with children or adults at risk.

- ❖ Arranging private meetings of students with teachers anywhere other than in FPMT-RONA's designated meeting areas or public places. This also applies to online meetings and courses.
- ❖ Non-consensual touching in general.
- ❖ Meeting alone with children and adults at risk associated with FPMT-RONA, outside of the work environment.
- ❖ Investigative questioning after an allegation or concern has been raised. Instead, listen with an open mind in a caring manner. Then record the information and report it to the Designated Protection Person, who will notify the appropriate authorities if required.

You Should Never (Even in Fun):

- ❖ Initiate or engage in sexually provocative conversations or activity.
- ❖ Allow the use of inappropriate language to go unchallenged.
- ❖ Do things of a personal nature for children or adult at risks that they can do themselves.
- ❖ Trivialize or exaggerate child or adult abuse issues.
- ❖ Allow any allegations made by a child or adults, students, staff, or volunteers, to go without being reported and addressed.
- ❖ Make promises to keep any disclosure confidential from relevant authorities.

Regarding All Your Relationships Within and Around FPMT-RONA:

- ❖ Respect everyone's right to privacy.
- ❖ Help create a culture in which everyone feels able to report experiences of harmful, uncomfortable attitudes or behavior.
- ❖ Act with discretion with regards to your personal relationships. Ensure your personal relationships do not undermine harmony or impact on your capacity for impartiality.
- ❖ Be aware that conflicts of interest can arise, leading to misunderstandings. This can happen particularly where there is an imbalance of power or close personal relationship. Where such potential situations arise, one should discuss this with the Regional Coordinator, and possibly the team as relevant.
- ❖ Be aware of the procedures for reporting concerns or incidents and how to contact the Designated Protection People.
- ❖ Should you find yourself the subject of inappropriate affection or attention from anyone, it is essential to record this, including the date and time, and report it to a Designated Protection Person.
- ❖ Report any concerns to one of the Designated Protection People. If they are not available, tell another responsible person at FPMT-RONA.
- ❖ Maintain appropriate boundaries with others at FPMT-RONA. Be aware of the scope of your role and when necessary, pass information to those whose role it is to deal with specific matters. Be careful not to give personal or Dharma advice to individuals that goes beyond your expertise or role. Respond with empathy and kindness, rather than being drawn into giving expert advice. If there are concerns that a person might need further help this should be reported to a Designated Protection Person or Regional Coordinator.
- ❖ Study, sign and abide by the FPMT Protecting from Abuse Policy and the FPMT Ethical Policy.

6. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS AND CONCERNS

Under no circumstances should a staff person or volunteer carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse.

Suspicious must not be discussed with anyone other than the Designated Protection People nominated above. A written record of the concerns should be made in accordance with these procedures and kept in a secure place.

6.1 RECEIVING, RESPONDING AND REPORTING AN ALLEGATION OR CONCERN

- Never promise unconditional confidentiality.
- Explain that if the person expressing the concern may have been abused or be at risk of abuse you may need to tell someone. Explain the role of the Designated Protection Person.
- Listen very carefully.
- Only ask questions to clarify your understanding.
- Do not ask searching questions – this could compromise a future investigation.
- Offer reassurance and thank the person for telling you.
- Tell the person you will try to get them the help they need.
- Explain what you will do, e.g. tell the Designated Protection Person.
- Then tell the Designated Protection Person

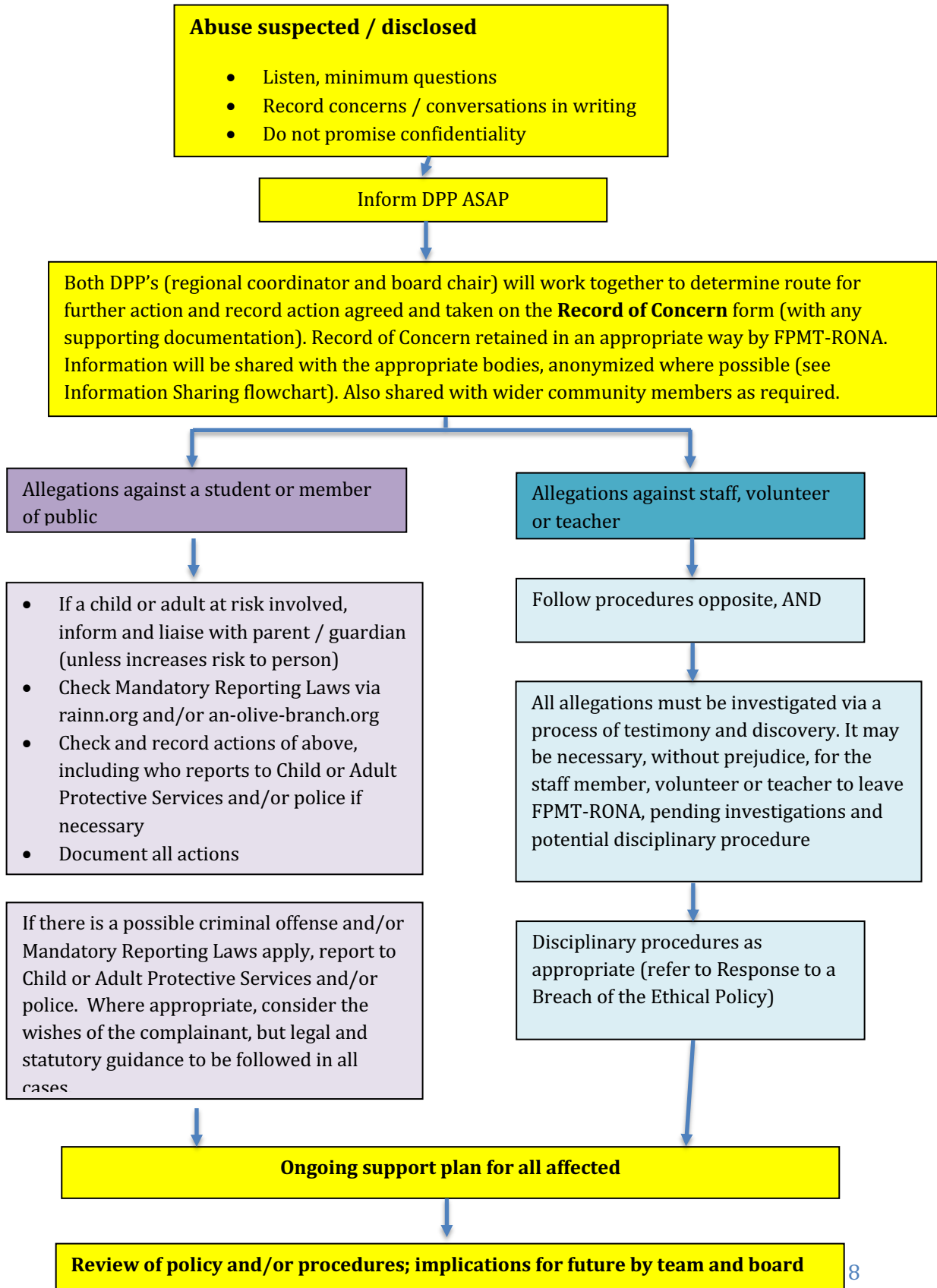
Concern Regarding Abuse at an Affiliate

If you have a concern regarding abusive behavior of a staff member, volunteer, teacher or other person at a location other than FPMT-RONA, such as an FPMT affiliate, please use that affiliate's reporting channels.

If your concern regarding abuse is related to more than one FPMT affiliate, or you have raised your concern via an affiliate's reporting channel and are dissatisfied with their handling of your concern, please contact the FPMT International Office Designated Protection Person as listed here: <https://fpmt.org/fpmt/problem-solving/share-feedback-and-concerns-related-to-fpmt-inc/#cra>

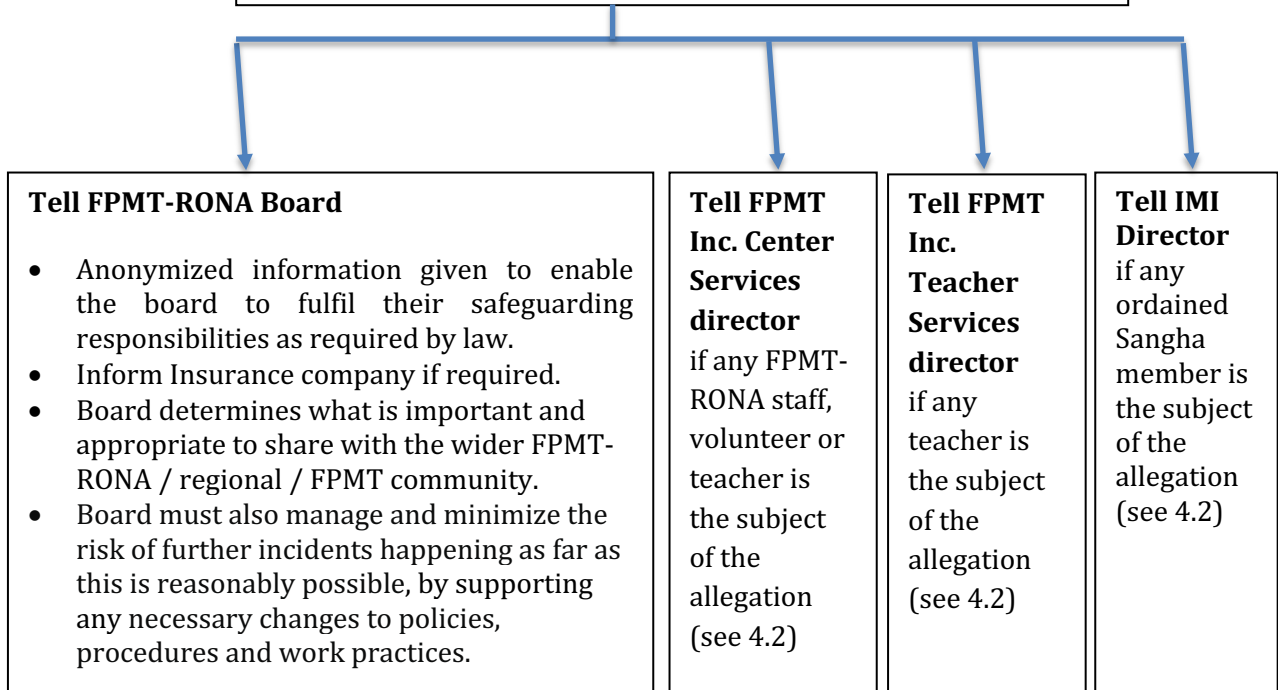
6.2 PROCEDURES FLOW-CHARTS

DPP = Designated Protection Person



INFORMATION SHARING DURING / FOLLOWING AN INVESTIGATION

- **The two DPP's** (regional coordinator and board chair) will share the allegation with each other as soon as possible unless one of them is the subject of the allegation. (If this is the case, FPMT Inc. Center Services director to be told immediately).
- Action is taken to fulfil legal and statutory requirements and to protect anyone who may be at risk of being harmed.



7. CARE AND SUPPORT

FPMT-RONA is committed to offering care and support, working with statutory agencies as appropriate, to all those who have been affected by abuse who have contact with or are part of FPMT-RONA. This may include the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator. Support may be needed for the wider community also.

7.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Prioritize the wellbeing and safety of all who come into contact with FPMT-RONA.
- Never promise to keep anything reported confidential. It should be explained at the outset that any disclosure will be shared internally or with external agencies as required. However, the person's privacy will be respected as much as possible.
- For the purposes of recording, it is important to listen. Questions should be kept to the minimum necessary to understand what is being alleged, and leading questions avoided. (*The use of leading questions can cause problems for any subsequent investigation and court proceedings.*)
- All those involved should take great care in reaching conclusions and making decisions. Regarding sharing information within FPMT-RONA, confidentiality and privacy of all the individuals concerned should be protected as appropriate and feasible. When the process is complete, consideration should be given to what is appropriately shared with the wider FPMT-RONA/regional/FPMT community.
- Whatever action you may have to take, and even if the authorities are involved, don't lose sight of the person or persons at the center of the concern. Ensure that there is someone to whom they can turn for support after any allegation or investigation. If they give further information, then go through the process of listening and recording as already described.
- When dealing with adults at risk, their wishes, feelings and mental capacity must be taken into account, and people should be supported to make their own decisions and encouraged to give informed consent when possible and safety considerations permit.
- Be aware that although the particular individual that has disclosed abuse may now be safe and protected, it is important to think about the potential risk to others from the alleged perpetrator. If the matter is serious, inform the appropriate agencies as required, and also pass information to those who may need be aware in order to protect others.
- It is important to think carefully how best to maximize everyone's rights to privacy as much as is feasible. There will be people with whom information needs to be shared. In many cases this could be anonymized, and the person's name only be shared with those where this is essential. Consider carefully what is shared by email, particularly bearing in mind data protection considerations, and again anonymize where feasible, or encrypt and password protect documents with names of alleged perpetrators and those who have been harmed.
- FPMT-RONA needs to make clear decisions to promote the wellbeing and safety of all they come into contact with. However, it is important to maintain equanimity towards all those involved in any allegation and at the same time ensure robust safeguarding procedures. Respect and compassion need to be shown to both the person harmed and the alleged perpetrator, and where appropriate and feasible, care and support given.

8. CONTACT INFORMATION

8.1 FPMT-RONA CONTACT DETAILS

Designated Protection People (DPP):

- **Regional Coordinator:** Melissa Kaye, regionalcoordinator@fpmtna.org
- **Board Chair:** Namdrol Miranda Adams, board@fpmtna.org

8.2 FPMT INC. CONTACT DETAILS

- FPMT Center Services director: François Lecointre, francois@fpmt.org
- FPMT Teacher Services director: François Lecointre, francois@fpmt.org
- IMI Director: Ven. Thubten Chokyi, director@imisangha.org

9. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- RAINN: National Sexual Assault Hotline
<https://rainn.org>, 800-656-HOPE
Free, confidential support 24/7 via phone, text, and chat
- Child Help
<https://www.childhelpline.org>
Dedicated to the prevention and treatment of child abuse
Counselors available 24/7 to answer questions, provide resources & support, and talk through difficult situations.
- National Domestic Violence Hotline
<https://www.thehotline.org/>, 800-799-SAFE
Free, confidential support 24/7 via phone, text, and chat
- An Olive Branch
www.an-olive-branch.org
A USA based organization formed in 2011 as a project of the Zen Center of Pittsburgh. Growing out of the need for greater understanding and reduction of ethical misconduct on the part of religious leaders, they provide services to organisations in conflict after a teacher has been accused of misconduct. In the U.S. they promote understanding and healing and work to strengthen organizations' boards and policies to reduce the likelihood of future misconduct. They also have some information and resources available on their website.
- Thirtyone:eight
<https://thirtyoneeight.org/>
UK based safeguarding charity, which is consulted by churches and other organizations. They also advise other faith groups and a wide variety of statutory and third sector organizations with safeguarding concerns. They have a 24-hour advice helpline and also offer training and other resources.

10. RECORD OF CONCERN: *Strictly Private and Confidential*

One copy to be retained confidentially by FPMT-RONA for duration according to legal advice. Anonymized copy (without identifying details) sent to FPMT-RONA board.

Name of the subject of the report	
Contact information	
Person initiating concern	
Concern or incident (information received)	
Date, time and location	
Any relevant additional information	

<p>Action taken immediately (to be completed by Designated Protection Person to whom the report was made)</p>	
<p>Follow-up plan (by both Designated Protection People)</p> <p>State clearly if other agencies or FPMT Inc. staff were required to be contacted and when this was done</p>	
<p>Name: [print]</p> <p>Signature:</p> <p>Date:</p>	