

Code of Best Practice in Member Care

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada Code of Best Practice in Member Care is designed as a benchmark document to guide the policies and practice of organizations regarding the care and development of cross-cultural Christian workers. Although it is written for Canadian organizations, others in the international community may find it useful. However, it must be recognized that basic resources for support may not exist or be available in many situations.

The Code does not necessarily reflect current practice but encourages aspirations toward excellence. It is not intended to establish legal standards or liability. Rather the motivation for the development of this code rests on the theological foundation of godly stewardship of people who are made in the image of God. Appropriate member care is a tangible reflection of Jesus' command that His disciples love one another and witness to the world that they belong to Him.

The Code was derived consensually by mission and church representatives across Canada. Discussions at a March 2000 Member Care Roundtable in Toronto, Ontario, provided the material for the initial draft which was written by Dr. Irving Whitt and Bob Morris. This Roundtable was jointly sponsored by Missionary Health Institute, MissionPrep, The Intercultural Ministries (TIM) Centre Tyndale, and the Task Force for Global Mission of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Suggestions for revision of the document were made by participants at a subsequent Roundtable in Langley, British Columbia, sponsored by the ACTS Intercultural Ministry (AIM) Centre at Trinity Western University and the Task Force for Global Mission, EFC. The Code in its present form was written by Dr. Laurel McAllister (AIM Centre) in consultation with members of the sponsoring organizations.

Core values underlying the Code include the following:

- A commitment to dependence on God for wisdom, power, and love in all aspects of member care.
- A commitment to the total well-being of cross-cultural workers—helping them minister effectively, while recognizing the possible hazards, stresses, and sacrifice inherent in cross-cultural life and ministry.
- A commitment to the biblical ideal of the Body of Christ working together, through the church, mission organizations, and other partnerships.
- A commitment to the appropriate utilization of all available resources.
- A commitment to encourage organizations to practice care of their members with consistency, excellence, and high standards of ethical, spiritual, and moral responsibility.

Some of the main terminology in the code includes:

- **Principle:** a broad statement of purpose.
- **Key Indicator:** an observable and measurable outcome related to a principle.
- **Member:** a cross-cultural Christian worker—missionary, tentmaker or otherwise.

Section 1: Organizational Policy and Practice

Principle 1. Member care policies for all members—at home, abroad, or in transition—are effective, efficient, agreed-upon, and transparent.

Key indicators

- Leaders throughout the organization effectively model member care.
- Human resources staff, both at home and abroad, are recruited in part for their people management skills and are adequately trained to provide member care.
- The organization monitors how well member care policies achieve their objectives.
- Members have clear work objectives and performance standards, know to whom they report, and what support is provided by the organization.
- Benefits, such as adequate health care (physical and mental), and pension plans, are provided and reviewed regularly.

Principle 2. Members participate in the development of member care policies.

Key indicators

- Meetings of the organization's Human Resource Department (or equivalent) are regularly scheduled.
- Policy information is distributed routinely to members, and feedback is encouraged.
- Regular re-assessment of existing policies and practices is initiated and encouraged by the organization and its membership.
- Mutual accountability between organization and membership is encouraged and practiced.

Principle 3. Agreed-upon personal and organizational beliefs and conduct are essential to effective member care.

Key indicators

- The organization has clearly-stated policies concerning acceptable personal and organizational belief and conduct.
- A means of communicating these policies is in place and is utilized.
- The policies are consistently applied.
- Ramifications of particular unacceptable behaviours are specified.
- The ability to accept differences in non-essentials is articulated and is in evidence.

Principle 4. The organization is committed to developing an ethos of member care that enhances kingdom ministry.

Key indicators

- Member well-being—whether spiritual, physical, emotional, mental, moral, or social—is visibly identifiable.
- Core values for member care are in writing and available to everyone.
- An identifiable infrastructure exists for explicit care.
- Sufficient financial and human resources are allocated for the care of the members.
- Transparency, within the context of confidentiality and trust, is encouraged as part of the organizational culture of care.
- Issues necessary to move the organization toward a culture of care have been identified.

Section 2: Selection, Training, and Career Care

Principle 5. Candidate selection is fair, thorough, and takes into consideration the anticipated role(s) of both women and men.

Key Indicators

- The organization designs and conducts a thorough, objective candidate selection process, utilizing the best available resources.
- Issues relating to singleness, as well as to marriage and the family, are discussed.
- The selection process includes physical and mental health screening where possible.
- The process is clearly written, is provided to candidates at the outset, and is periodically reviewed with them.
- The process is undertaken in cooperation with the candidate’s sending church(es).
- Decisions throughout the selection process evidence a clear sense of God’s leading to all concerned.

Principle 6. Assignments reflect the member’s expertise, giftedness, developmental stage, strengths and limitations as much as is possible—while recognizing the need for, and God’s call to, workers in settings with limited resources and uncertain consequences.

Key indicators

- Members are given as much information as possible regarding ministry situations so that they can give “informed consent” to the assignment from the outset.
- In the case of married couples, assignments reflect consideration of the gifts and skills of both wife and husband.
- Assessment tools, including effectiveness evaluations and development reviews, are implemented.
- Team building exercises are carried out as possible and applicable.
- Training and mentoring are provided for assignments requiring additional expertise.

Principle 7. Appropriate training and professional support for members are integral to effective member care.

Key indicators

- The organization provides appropriate intercultural and language training before and during field assignments.
- The organization provides opportunity for professional support, such as participation in professional conferences, professional refreshment, membership in professional societies, and opportunity for job specific training and further studies as appropriate.
- The development of qualified leaders within the organization is valued and provided for.

Principle 8. Realistic work expectations, personal renewal, and endurance strategies are articulated and provided.

Key indicators

- Job descriptions are in place and subject to annual review.
- Discussion of strategies for long-term effectiveness are scheduled on a regular basis.
- Resources and accountability partners are found in national churches and within the host community when possible.
- The specific needs of both single and married members are appropriately considered.
- Members take an appropriate amount of time for home service (furlough) on a scheduled basis.

Principle 9. Organizational responsibilities extend beyond field service to home ministry (furlough), re-entry, retirement, and to re-deployment where necessary.

Key indicators

- Debriefing, including physical, psychological, ministry, and pastoral concerns, is required and provided.
- Rest, renewal, and opportunity for personal and ministry assessment are considered an essential part of home service (furlough).
- Members minister in supporting church fellowships in ways that are mutually enriching.
- Transition opportunities/seminars, which include cultural issues and issues related to re-deployment, re-entry and retirement, are provided.
- Resources (human and financial) are allocated for follow-up care during re-entry or re-deployment.

Section 3: Community Life

Principle 10. Healthy Christian communities enhance personal growth and development as well as ministry effectiveness.

Key indicators

- Responsibility for self-care, in community, is modeled and encouraged by leadership.
- Mutual care is planned for, clearly defined, and its importance communicated.
- The unique needs of single members are considered and provided for.
- Members develop reciprocal relationships with a variety of people in the host community.
- Periodic personal, team, and organizational assessments are required.

Principle 11. Responsibility for member care is personal, mutual, and organizational.

Key indicators

- Trained caregivers are identified and made available to members when needed.
- Opportunity is given for member interaction and mutual caring.
- Persons responsible for each sphere of organizational care have been identified.
- Members are deemed responsible for taking an active role in managing their own care.

Section 4: Family and Missionary Children (MKs) Care

Principle 12. The effectiveness of the Christian worker is related to the holistic care of the family, appropriate and proportionate to the stages of life.

Key indicators

- There is provision for re-assignment of primary homemakers as children grow through different phases of life.
- Opportunities for marital enrichment and couple retreats are provided and encouraged—both on the field and during home service (furlough).
- Financial provision and counsel are made available for families in transition, including resignation or retirement.
- The organization makes provision for follow-up care for member families at re-entry, and beyond for MKs.
- Professional, personal, and spiritual assessment is provided for all members of the family.
- Care for the family may include extended family members.

Section 5: Relationships with Churches

Principle 13. The local sending church is included in the continuum of care.

Key indicators

- There is evidence of shared trust among the local sending church, the organization, and the member.
- Communication is evidenced between the local church and the organization at every stage of a member's life.
- The organization partners with the local church in a member's preparation for initial ministry assignment, re-entry, re-deployment, and retirement.
- Such partnerships exhibit realistic expectations and mutual benefit.
- Training of members is shared by organization and local church where possible and mutually beneficial.

Section 6: Crisis/Contingency Care

Principle 14. Cross-cultural life and work can be uniquely stressful for individuals and families. Therefore, procedures are in place and resources provided to help members in a variety of contingencies.

Key indicators

- Members agree on what constitutes a crisis*.
- Policies governing the handling of the crisis are written and communicated to all members.
- Policies, existing to cover a variety of contingencies, have explicit information for each contingency.
- Policies exhibit flexibility and sensitivity.
- Necessary care, such as post traumatic stress care and counselling, is available**.

* Suggested definition of crisis:

A situation which creates, or has the potential of creating, trauma for the individual or family and which needs immediate attention on the part of leadership. e.g., field issues; contingency-related issues such as disasters, political kidnapping, death, accidents; personal and family issues (including raising teens); moral issues; major medical needs; deep depression, anxiety, contemplation of suicide, etc.

** The reality of spiritual darkness and the conflict inherent in Christian ministry contexts affect workers in complex and often traumatic ways. Crises may be related to spiritual battles that workers are involved in. Caregivers need to be aware of this dimension and how to deal with it.

Principle 15. Procedures and resources are in place to discover and deal with issues of moral lapse. A disciplinary process is defined and a process of restoration spelled out.

Key indicators

- Preventative issues and strategies are addressed in pre-field training.
- Confidentiality is respected and balanced with accountability to the organization, sending church, supporters, and other members.
- Confidentiality and all related issues are clearly defined and made known to all parties involved.
- Movement toward restoration is made whenever possible.

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