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## **INTRODUCTION**

Our churches are committed to providing a nurturing and caring community where everyone from the youngest to the oldest is valued, respected and safe.

Anyone who participates in church activities does so with the expectation of care in a safe and secure environment.

Careful thought needs to be given to providing programs and activities which promote healthy relationships and spiritual growth.

Caring is intentional. A well-planned program takes into account the need to care. Every event and activity needs to reflect that care.

Think for a moment about your relationship with God the Father. The Bible describes this relationship in terms of us being like children. We know He cares for us but we never feel demeaned or manipulated. The challenge to us is to do the same for those in our care. The fundamental challenge is to be like Jesus, to treat people like He treats us.

## **PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY**

This policy aims to provide a framework of safety and care in our church communities. All people working within the church communities are expected to adhere to the policy.

The policy states:

- 1. The 'safety and care' principles that should be applied within all church programs.*
- 2. The 'safety and care' practices for the attention of leaders and parents.*
- 3. Ways in which the local church will be a safe and secure place.*
- 4. How the local church should respond to the issue of 'abuse'.*

**Please note: throughout this policy the use of the words “the church” or “church community” includes the congregation of New Life Christian Reformed Church  
in Woodcroft**

**The “Church Office” is located at 240 Richmond Rd Woodcroft**

**The words “young people” include all people up to the age of 18 years of age.**

## **PART ONE**

### **A CODE OF PRACTICE FOR CARING**

The care of children, young people and adults begins with the attitude of leaders. It is through what we do and the way we do it that demonstrates care in action.

#### **1. Attitude of Leaders.**

##### ***Modelling***

Children, young people and adults learn as much from what leaders do as what they say. For this reason, leaders should ensure that what they do matches what they say and in all ways honours Christ.

##### ***Favouritism***

No behaviour should give the impression of favouritism or encourage special relationships with individuals. The person who is not easy to love often needs more love from us. It is also important to remember that the way leaders communicate with one another is observed. Nicknames, 'put downs' and sexist language only reinforces behaviour that children and young people, especially, may already see all too often.

##### ***Wisdom***

Leaders will find there are many situations that cannot be covered in a policy statement. At these times the leader needs to use the gift of discernment and wisdom in making a decision. A wise leader/carer is also mindful of the principle of not only doing the right thing, but being seen to do the right thing.

##### ***A Caring Style***

Where participants or members of the wider community observe leaders at work they need to see a caring style that is genuinely Christian.

##### ***Duty of Care***

Every leader has what is termed a 'duty of care'. This means that it is their duty to do all things within their power that they can be reasonably expected to do to ensure the safety and security of those within their care. Operating within the framework and principles of this 'Safety and Care Policy' will result in the leader faithfully exercising their duty of care. Leaders cannot transfer their duty of care to others, e.g. a non-leader. Responsibility can be shared, but not totally delegated.

## **2. Physical contact**

### ***Choice and Initiation***

Some people do not seek or enjoy physical contact and are entitled to determine the degree of physical contact they have with others except in exceptional circumstances, i.e. when needing medical attention. It is therefore inappropriate, in the normal course of events, to initiate physical contact.

### ***Adult Responsibility***

Physical contact between adults and children may be misconstrued. Any physical activity that is or may be construed as sexually stimulating to the adult or child is inappropriate and must be avoided. As children may or may not be aware of creating such situations, it is the duty of the adult to be alert to such circumstances and to act accordingly.

### ***Toileting and Touching of Infants***

Toileting and handling of infants will be done by female carers where appropriate. There should be no touching of the private parts nor hands placed under clothing of children by adults. If for any reason an older child needs to be supervised in going to the toilet, they are to be accompanied by two adults.

### ***Privacy***

Care needs to be exercised so that in situations where physical contact occurs, it does not occur in private. Where private conversations are necessary with a child or a member of the opposite sex, the leader and participant should remain visible to other leaders.

### ***Corporal Punishment***

On no account must any form of corporal punishment be administered. The only form of physical restraint appropriate is to protect someone from harm, e.g. reasonable restraint to stop a fight, to stop bullying or to avoid an accident.

## **3. Program Considerations**

### ***Medical Permission Form***

All programs or activities involving children and/or young people up to the age of 18 must obtain a Medical Permission Form at the beginning of each year (see Appendix 7). This needs to be available at ALL meetings and activities for the group throughout the year in case of medical emergencies and must be kept safe and secure between meetings. A copy will be kept by the Church Administrator.

### ***Purpose of activities***

When planning activities, leaders should consider the purpose of the activity within the context of the program goals. Consideration should include:

1. The site and nature of activities and the nature of what happens should minimise risks.
2. For activities involving children and young people, a discipline policy needs to be decided upon prior to the activity which sets out in writing the rules and consequences of not following those rules. This needs to be sent home to parents prior to the activity. Sample forms are available from the Church Office or Childsafe Co-ordinator.
3. Activities or games that require children and young people to act alone or in pairs, independent of leaders, need to be very carefully considered.
4. If at all possible, activities for children and young people that provide access to or contact with strangers should be avoided. If, during an activity, it is impossible for them not to come into contact with strangers, then great care must be exercised.
5. For children and young people, all activities need to have defined boundaries that are easily observed or patrolled.
6. Leaders need to avoid situations where it is possible for participants to become physically isolated.
7. Games or activities that may exploit gender, physical or intellectual differences must be assessed as to whether or not they are appropriate.
8. Consideration needs to be given to the 'message' given to participants by activities and events that are organised. That is, the way things are done 'speaks' loudly.
9. Not compelling participation in certain types of activities, but trying to design activities that maximise participation.

***Check List:*** It can be helpful for leaders to develop a check list before program activities occur. This can best be done within the leadership group.

**Key questions should be asked like:**

**Have you thought about...?**

**Have you checked.....?**

**Have you communicated....?**

### ***Risk Assessment***

Activities where there is a risk of possible injury e.g. outdoor adventure activities, require leaders to discuss the activity with the participants or the parents of the child and young person. A risk assessment needs to be carried out prior to conducting the activity. A risk assessment form is available at

Appendix 5. The ChildSafe website also has guidelines “checklist for assessing a safety plan” & “permission to proceed” which should be used during the planning stages of activities. If leaders are in doubt about any aspect of safety they should seek further advice. Leaders who take responsibility for these activities must possess the necessary skills and/or training required for the safe conduct of the activity. All completed documentation should be filed as a part of the Programs documentation.

### ***Leaders/Carers who are under 18 years of age***

Leaders/carers who are under 18 years of age should not be considered an “adult in charge” and therefore must not be included in the Leader to Participant ratios listed below. No person under 18 years of age may be a carer in the crèche (they may be a helper).

### ***Leader to Participant Ratio for activities involving Children & Young People***

The ratio of leaders to child/young person should be relevant to the task/activity being undertaken. Broadly, residential programs are 1:10; water and adventure based activities are 1:6 and 1:15 for general activities. For all water based activities you must have one leader who is qualified in life saving.

### ***Male/Female Representation***

As a general guide, leaders ought to be aware of the need for both male and female leaders at an activity where there are both male and female children or young people. On a residential activity this should be considered as part of the risk assessment. In an activity or programme for young boys only, it is advisable for there to be one or two female leaders as well as the male leaders.

### ***Two Person Rule***

It is a requirement of our liability insurance and also of this policy that the two person rule is in place at all times. This means that on no occasion should a carer or leader be on their own with a child or young person up to the age of 18. When transporting a child or young person, there must be a minimum of two children/young people in the car when there is only one leader.

### ***Guidelines for mentoring young people under the age of 18***

The mentor will comply with the NSW screening guidelines before commencing mentoring the young person. A permission form needs to be signed by the parent/guardian of the young person before commencing mentoring. Forms are available from the Church Office or from the Childsafe

Co-ordinator. Verbal permission needs to be obtained from the parent/guardian by the mentor before every meeting or activity with the young person. Meeting suggestions will also be provided to the mentor, such as all meetings between the mentor and the young person to be in the home of the young person while the parent/guardian is present or in a public place.

### ***Parental Involvement and Permission for activities involving Children & Young People***

Any program that involves overnight stays for children or young people up to the age of 18 (or includes risk-oriented activities) must have specific parental permission. Permission forms ask for permission for leaders to act in the case of a medical emergency and also any specific medical and dietary information that leaders should be aware of. Examples of permission forms are available from the Childsafe website. For activities such as Holiday Clubs, an attendance register is required listing the name of the child, their age, allergies, name of parents, contact telephone numbers for parents and parents signature giving permission for the child to attend. All such information is held in accordance with privacy legislation.

### ***Alcohol and Illegal Drugs for activities involving Children & Young People***

All programs involving children and young people are to be alcohol free. Where the use of alcohol and illegal drugs has been a problem, leaders should consider training in detecting and dealing with issues of substance abuse.

### ***Use of Vehicles***

Leaders should give careful consideration to 'safety and care' principles when using motor vehicles. The law requires:

1. Cars only carry the number of passengers for which they are registered.
2. All passengers to wear seat belts.
3. Drivers to abide by the road rules.
4. Drivers to hold the appropriate licence for the vehicle being driven.
5. Vehicles to be driven in a manner that is safe (e.g. avoiding driver fatigue, not driving an unworthy vehicle, etc)
6. **Red P** Plate drivers must not drive children or young people up to the age of 18 in their cars.

### ***Special Needs***

The special needs (including behavioural, emotional and physical) of participants need to be taken into account when planning activities. Leaders

should be aware of what is possible in the circumstances and have thought through the approaches for meeting these challenges.

### ***Equipment***

Equipment is required to be checked prior to use to ensure it is functional and safe for its intended use. For specialist equipment the ability/qualification to use the equipment is necessary.

### ***Emergency Considerations***

For every residential program the leader must complete an emergency information sheet available from the Church Office. This will include information about the expected duration, location, participants and contact details for their activity. Depending on the activity, an emergency plan might be required.

Whenever an accident occurs leaders should:

1. Deal with the immediate situation ensuring the safety of the group and ascertain the nature of the emergency.
2. Ensure that any injured persons are attended to and determine whether the available first aid is adequate for the situation or whether the injured party requires emergency medical attention.
3. If relevant, contact the appropriate emergency service.
4. Inform parents/guardians when a child or young person is involved in the situation.
5. Reassess the planned activities in the light of the incident. Plan for ways to proceed.
6. Take notes of the situation and photograph if appropriate.
7. Contact the relevant church leader if the situation requires it.
8. Fill out an Accident Report Form (available from the Church Office) and return it for filing.
9. Debrief the situation with the participant group.
10. Follow up insurance aspects if relevant.

### ***First Aid***

Program leaders must consider what level of first aid training the team should possess. This will depend on the nature and location of the program. Camps, for example, must include at least one leader who has first aid qualifications. Programs should have access to a well equipped and maintained first aid kit. If the nature of the program warrants it, leaders should be aware of access avenues for further medical assistance.

### ***Insurance***

All youth events that are cooperative (i.e. they involve participants from more than one Christian Reformed Church) are covered under various aspects of the Youth Committee's denominational insurance cover. This includes accidental injury. The Church's own 'public liability' insurance is not as extensive as the denominational cover, but does cover all church appointed leaders and volunteers and program activities anywhere in Australia. High risk activities like parachuting and canyoning are not covered.

### **Acknowledgement**

Much of the information to this point in this policy document has been summarised and adapted from the Scripture Union document Safety & Care . (1999).

## PART TWO

### GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH SUSPECTED OR REPORTED ABUSE

#### Introduction

This section **outlines the church's** guidelines **for dealing with suspected or reported abuse**. It acknowledges that abuse is a problem in our society and that abused people need the care and support of the church community. All cases of abuse, no matter where it takes place, will be treated seriously and dealt with according to these guidelines which seek to play both a preventative and a caring, healing role.

The definitions of physical, sexual and emotional abuse are detailed in the CRCA pastoral report dealing with abuse entitled "Healing a Broken Trust Revised 2012"

#### Aims for the Local Church Community

Our church community is committed to promoting the dignity and the rights of respect and safety of every human being, regardless of race, age, creed or gender. As an expression of this commitment, the local church recognises its responsibility to:

- Acknowledge that abuse can occur both in society and in the church community.
- Care and respond to past and present victims of abuse and perpetrators in ways that seek to bring about justice and healing.
- Speak out against all forms of abuse.
- Increase the church community's awareness of abuse.
- Educate its people to respond appropriately to abuse.
- Listen to and encourage people to speak out against abuse and to seek help.
- Provide a safe and abuse free environment for all church programs and activities.
- Model right and just relationships within the church community.

#### Principles for Dealing with Suspected or Reported Abuse

Appropriate steps to prevent abuse in our church community will be taken. We will encourage parents, leaders and others to talk to children about protective behaviours. We will clearly outline our church's policy on safety and care and make it known in appropriate circles.

1. Every breach of the policy will be taken seriously. We will listen carefully and treat the complainant with dignity and respect.
2. Everyone will be assumed innocent unless and until guilt is demonstrated (or admitted to). While allegations are being investigated, a church worker

subject to an allegation of a breach in safety and care will be limited to areas of ministry not involving the area of the alleged breach of trust.

3. Every complaint will be dealt with in accordance with the guidelines established by the CRCA Abuse Committee in the document “Healing a Broken Trust 2012” and the complainant will be kept informed through the process. A copy is available in the church office.
4. The church will not protect perpetrators and will pursue justice and healing for all involved.
5. Confidentiality will be respected within the framework of the laws of the state.
6. The church will seek to bring about healing in the lives of victims and perpetrators and facilitate means of finding appropriate help for victims and perpetrators.
7. In the case of a young person telling a leader, e.g. Kids church leader, JAM leader about a situation that requires further follow up, if the issue has occurred outside church premises, i.e. something at home or school such as abuse, bullying, or mental illness the following must happen:
  - If the victim is male the matter needs to be brought to Brian Vaatstra’s attention.
  - If the victim is female the matter needs to be brought to Chantelle Eschler’s attention.

Both Brian and Chantelle are happy to help deal with the situation or to refer the matter on to professionals if necessary.

### **Putting the Principles into Practice**

Our church community has implemented the following in response to the above principles.

#### **1. *Safety and Care Workgroup***

The function of the Safety and Care Workgroup is to oversee the Code of Practice and provide advice to Session. This group will meet at least twice a year.

The Workgroup is responsible to:

- Ensure the Policy of Safety and Care for Children and Young People is carried out.
- Maintain appropriate procedures for the selection of church workers responsible for the care of children and young people.
- Ensure suitably experienced and qualified people are available to provide care for people should abuse occur.

2. ***A Screening Procedure for all Leaders and Carers***

All leaders and carers, both paid and volunteer, will be required to undergo a screening procedure as outlined in Appendix 1 (page 22) **prior to taking up the role or appointment**. All cooks and other helpers on residential activities are also required to complete this screening procedure prior to the activity.

3. ***Training for Leaders***

Appropriate training through Childsafe.org is provided for all leaders in the church community and for carers of children and young people so that the policy is understood and all leaders and carers are familiar with the code of practice.

4. ***Guidelines for Pastors, Elders, Deacons and Pastoral Carers, Growth Group Leaders, leaders youth and children's programmes:***

All people within the church community should be able to receive pastoral care from the designated pastoral carers. Responsibility for appropriate and helpful pastoral care rests with the person giving pastoral care. Where the Pastoral Carer is vulnerable or inexperienced in dealing with matters of abuse they should refer the matter to an appropriate person.

The following guidelines are helpful for pastoral care:

- a. Set time limits for all one to one pastoral care work,
- b. Pray at the close of the pastoral care session,
- c. Be accountable to another Pastor, Elder, Pastoral Carer or Growth Group Leader for the pastoral care provided.

5. ***Teaching Children and Young People to Protect Themselves***

Children and young people will be encouraged to know about protective behaviours through the following information program. Once per year in each specific children's and young people's program (eg Children's Church or JAM), the issue of appropriate adult behaviour will be raised by an adult leader of those groups. This should outline the following:

1. No other adult or teenager should tell you to keep a secret that you should not tell your parents.
2. If you are unsure about what another adult or teenager is asking you to do, say that you would like to ask your parents first.
3. If you feel that something another adult or teenager asked you to do or did to you was not right, always tell your mum and dad about it, or another adult you trust.

6. ***General Church Community Awareness***

The Workgroup and Pastors will ensure that the congregation has an adequate awareness of this policy of safety and care in the following ways:

1. Material available in the foyer dealing with the issue of safety and care.

2. Occasional relevant notes in the bulletin and comments from the pulpit, regarding the issue of safety and care.
3. Publish and promote contact points within the church community and appropriate counselling services.
4. Making available study material for small groups. (A single study for all small groups is recommended.)
5. Include relevant information in the welcome pack for new members.

7. **Baby Sitting**

It is not the policy of this church to arrange babysitting or to recommend babysitters.

## Guidelines for Handling Complaints of Breaches of the Policy

1. Every complaint will be taken seriously and **should be reported to a suitably qualified person**. In our congregations the people to whom you can bring a complaint are:

Rev. Brian Vaatstra	99204579
Chantelle Eschler	0402956058

2. The Christian Reformed Church of Australia has established a Sexual Abuse Complaints Committee (SACC). Its charter is to deal directly with complaints of sexual abuse and harassment against church leaders and workers. Accountability, objectivity and pastoral care for all parties is the aim of SACC in dealing with any complaint received. The Chairman is Reverend Leo Douma who is always available to be contacted if you have any concerns. The SACC representative for NSW is Gerald Vander Kolk. His number is 95480068. All complaints are handled with sensitivity and confidentiality.
3. Present New South Wales legislation requires that all those who have a caring role with children or young people have a **community responsibility to inform appropriate authorities about disclosures of abuse**. Mandatory reporters are defined in NSW legislation. They are those who deliver the following services to children as part of their paid or professional work:

- health care - doctors, nurses, dentists and other health workers
- welfare - psychologists, social workers and youth workers
- education - teachers
- children's services - child care workers, family day carers and home based carers
- residential services - refuge workers, community housing providers
- law enforcement - police

Any person with direct responsibility to provide the above mentioned services must report risk of significant harm to children.

Managers, including both paid employees and volunteers, who supervise direct services are also mandated to report.

In New South Wales, Keep Them Safe: A Shared Approach to Child Well Being is in place to cover all aspects of safeguarding the rights of children and has a very informative and easy to use web site for those who would like to find out more: <http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au>. Reports relating to child abuse or neglect should be referred to the Child Protection Helpline on 133 627 if you are a Mandatory reporter or 132 111 if you fall under the General Public definition.

Guidance on making a Child Protection report is available from the [Child Wellbeing & Child Protection - NSW Interagency Guidelines](#).

4. Where the complainants find themselves in danger of physical harm, **every effort must first be made to secure the safety of that person.**
5. Any person who has been accused of abuse will, at an appropriate time, be challenged about what they have done and offered assistance (pastoral care, counselling).
6. A perpetrator with a leadership role in our congregations will be dealt with as per the guidelines established by the CRCA Abuse Committee in the document "Healing a Broken Trust Revised 2012". Copies of this document are available from the Church office.

## PART THREE

### **GUIDELINES FOR MINISTRY TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH OR CONVICTED OF CHILD ABUSE OR A CRIME INVOLVING ACTUAL OR ATTEMPTED MOLESTATION OF A MINOR, OR A CRIME OF SEXUAL ABUSE.**

#### **Why do we need to have special procedures for child abuse?**

Child abuse must be treated differently to other sins, not because it is a worse sin but because the consequences of mishandling the situation can be devastating - for the victims, the church, the kingdom. It is an addictive activity.

Child abuse is fundamentally an abuse of trust and power as well as enlisting, abusing, distorting and disorienting the child's need for intimacy, affirmation, security, trust and guidance. The effects of abuse can alter the perception of reality for the victim, which can lead to a radical distortion of the very core of self identity. Also, see point one in the Notes that follow these guidelines.

#### **FIRST STEPS**

When the leadership of the church/Safety and Care Workgroup becomes aware of a child abuser or someone in the above category in the church community it is vital that a firm framework is developed immediately to ensure the safety of children.

It is vitally important that expert advice and help is sought from someone experienced in dealing with child abusers. The person giving expert help will be able to lead the leadership/Workgroup in such areas as risk management and recognising the situation for what it really is. The need to include someone in the situation who has had experience in the area of dealing with child abusers is vital. Not simply a counsellor or a pastor because their focus and experience is rightly often believing for change and advocating for the individual offender rather than having the experience of offender behaviour to adequately guide the risk management process. Wise planning is needed to ensure the welfare of the church community while making appropriate provision for the welfare and care of the abuser.

#### **GUIDELINES**

1. **Members of the Safety and Care Workgroup and Session are to be advised immediately and a meeting of the Workgroup is to be called as soon as possible.** Expert help is to be identified immediately. While modification may need to be made to these guidelines, it is safer to use a rule that such variations never be decided by one person acting alone; never without the involvement of the Safety and Care Workgroup and never without discussion with those with considerable expertise in the area. The Safety and Care Workgroup will maintain a list of expert contacts which will be reviewed by them annually.

2. **Find out as much as possible about the accused and exactly what they are meant to have done** - never simply rely on the version of the offender. Obtain a copy of the judgement given against the offender. For those who have been charged but not as yet convicted, make enquiries about the charges and contact any previous churches, employers, family members or community contacts who could give the full story. Not all offenders are suitable for inclusion in fellowships. There are some that are too dangerous for inclusion, and there is a time for protecting the congregation. Pray and listen in case God is warning. Talk to previous pastors. If you decide someone is not suitable for inclusion, offer some help at the same time that you are ruling out other options. For example: "We would like to offer you more individual time than most of our congregation get ....but not the option of attendance at our services or meetings. One of our senior workers would like to meet with you for an hour every fortnight for individual fellowship and pastoral care..... but not attendance at the wider fellowship."
3. **Assess the risks.** In consultation with the expert help, ask such questions as:
- Are there any children in the proposed congregation? Is it possible to ensure the safety of many children / youth running around? Also consider the particular families you do have. Are these families likely to leave? How well supervised are the children? What are the church buildings / location of toilet like for child safety? A congregation with children is actually not good for the offender who should be keeping himself or herself away from any locations where there are children – and it is not good for children. The ideal is to find a place / group or service time which usually has zero children [or youth if his victims were older.]
  - Do one of his previous victims attend the proposed congregation?
  - Is the proposed congregation so large that too many people will need to know his story?
  - If no one is told he or she could use the credibility gained in the church to contact and abuse others outside the pastor's awareness.
  - Who are the vulnerable people who could be a target for abuse?
  - How do we convey to the offender he or she is not beyond the love of God while protecting the church community?
  - How should people in the church react when he or she is visiting and their grandchildren arrive unexpectedly?
  - How do we avoid the offender quietly manoeuvring himself or herself into the position of teacher to some people in the church?

- How do we avoid a split in the congregation over the way this situation is handled? There will be a mixed reaction, we should aim for unity not uniformity in response to the offender.
4. **Consider** whether this congregation has within it or can access from outside, sufficient experience to handle this wisely.
  5. **Make specific plans to see how you might minimise the risks to children, unity, vulnerable people, the offender etc.** These plans should include:
    - the offender must never be with children in the church community or in a family home of church members
    - the offender must not be allowed at any time to have a conversation with a child or for children to see the offender interacting with people the children trust
    - vulnerable people should be identified wherever possible - this needs to be watched with ongoing vigilance where the offender is in the church community.
  6. **Identify a congregation or growth group as a possible group to be asked to *welcome/adopt* the offender.** It will be necessary to tell the whole church community of his presence. A smaller congregation may be more suitable. See point two in the Notes that follow these guidelines.
  7. **Get permission from the offender to tell the congregation or Growth Group.** Only then approach the leader of the congregation or Growth Group. Don't prescribe how the congregation or Growth Group should react but ask them if they are prepared to take on this specific ministry with the support and expertise of the Safety and Care Workgroup and pastoral team. Let them know if it gets too hard the offender will be removed from their fellowship. Ensure there are people with the required expertise in the group. Tell them there are no guarantees of what choices the offender will make in the future and that, while many may grow to like and trust the offender, he or she must NEVER be trusted with children.

We should aim for unity not uniformity in the response of the congregation or Growth Group. Ask for their confidentiality unless they see a specific risk and to contact a member of the Safety and Care Workgroup first to discuss that risk. Remember that New South Wales legislation requires that we have a community responsibility to inform appropriate authorities when we become aware of child abuse.

8. **Set up structures for ongoing care and monitoring.** Appoint three or four mature Christian people who are informed about abuse issues, to surround the offender with prayer support, welcome, care, fellowship, vigilance, accountability and guidelines. One of this Support Group must be with the offender at all times when he or she is in the church community, including during social occasions. Configurations can vary, but ensure that within the Support Group he or she is placed in are specifically committed to this and between them can provide the support and supervision needed. Some of the Support Group need to be wise and strong. If the offender is at all strong, one of these must have expertise in the abuse area and be alert to the offender enlisting the soft hearted to be his or her advocates in unhelpful ways. The Support Group must be encouraged to report back to the Safety and Care Workgroup on a regular basis and need to know that the Workgroup is constantly available for advice and support.
- One individual who has expertise with offender behaviour** should be appointed as his mentor. This role can include fellowship and supportive activities but must include tough accountability and challenges to patterns of thinking and acting, providing phone support if he or she has a period of struggle.
9. **The offender must not be given an active role as a leader or teacher of the Bible and have no position of responsibility in the church community.** Do not give the offender a role or status. Find ways the offender can learn to be helpful and care for others in areas where children or vulnerable people are not involved. Any involvement would need to be monitored by the small group described in point 6.
10. **The offender should be aware that his presence in the church community is welcome while he or she:**
- Refrains from contact with children in the church community or in a family home of church members. He or she should not initiate conversation with children at all, and should unobtrusively extricate him or herself self from any group that a child happens to join.
  - Implements a similar policy of avoiding being around children in the wider community.
  - Has no contact with single mothers.
  - Recognises it is time for the offender to listen and submit to the word, not teach others.
  - Is committed to engaging in the ongoing work required to change his or her past patterns of thinking and behaviour.
  - Meets fortnightly with a mentor appointed by the church

- Agree to the people in the group being informed of his or her past but not told his or her address.
- Recognises that it is appropriate to contribute to the body, but that the form this takes must be discussed first.
- Agrees to undertake rehabilitation therapy. The period of time/type of counselling would need to be put in place with expert advice.
- Agrees to all of these conditions in writing.
  - NB: Some restrictions need to be designed with the specific age of his or her victims in mind.

## **NOTES TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ABOVE GUIDELINES FOR MINISTRY TO CONVICTED OR CHARGED CHILD ABUSE OFFENDERS**

### **POINT ONE**

#### **Why do we need special guidelines and extra caution around this particular issue?**

The issue is not whether some sins are worse than other sins. Yes all sins separate us from God and all sins can be forgiven, but we **must** respond to child abuse differently to the way we respond to other moral failures, because

[a] It is highly addictive behaviour.

[b] History has shown that repentance and good intentions alone are not sufficient to stop future re-offending. Offenders need to engage in long term tough work to challenge and unpack their patterns of thinking and acting and restrict many of their daily choices for the rest of their lives. Those who are around them need to be vigilant forever.

[c] History also shows that the risk that we as well-intentioned church leaders will mishandle this situation is extremely high. This is an issue where consulting with those with more expertise is vital.

[d] Most importantly, the consequences of mishandling this issue can be extremely catastrophic for the child victims.

[e] The consequences of mishandling child abuse in the church are also huge for the local church, the wider church and the kingdom.

[f] Child abuse is a criminal offence and any reoccurrence must be reported to the appropriate authorities.

Be particularly aware that many offenders have had many years of deceiving and manipulating adults as well as children. Many church groups and well meaning caring Christians have been manipulated. Even those abusers who may attract more of our sympathy because they are either intellectually or socially inadequate, or have suffered abuse themselves, or are well presented, or sound genuinely repentant etc, can still go on to abuse more children.

## **POINT TWO**

### **Why is the size of congregation important?**

**There are huge risks to children in not telling the whole of the group who will be in contact with the offender.** This means that just assigning a buddy to the offender, or just informing the leadership or his or her small group - while still allowing the offender to also attend the bigger services and other social occasions without informing that wider group, does not solve the problem of what happens outside the awareness of those in the know. If no one is told he or she could use the credibility gained in the church to contact and abuse others outside the pastor's awareness. These risks could include developing a relationship off site with the single mum he or she met at church - or a member of the congregation may unknowingly give the offender work babysitting her grandchildren.

- As seen above, assigning someone to be with the offender at all times can be a useful additional strategy, but it should not be seen as an alternative to informing the whole group. A second weakness to consider is that this strategy fails to take account of the credibility he or she gains by children witnessing their parents talk to the offender in friendly fashion.
- Specify that he or she is also accompanied to the toilets. [We must tune in to the safety of boys far more than we have in the past.]

However were one to inform a large congregation of his or her past, this would greatly multiply the risks to the safety and well being of the abuser.

Thirdly in a large congregation, a policy of constantly informing all new comers would mean this issue begins to take an inappropriately dominant place in the life of the church as it would need to be revisited too often.

### **For these and other reasons, the best options seems to**

Seek out a small congregation or small para-church group where everyone can be told.

**Or** a small group within a larger parish, such as a hand picked cell group or an evening service of only a few regulars **but** with the agreement that everyone in that group is told and he or she only attends that specific fellowship group and not the other services or social occasions etc. Then everyone in this smaller group can be informed, educated about risks, consulted as to if they agree to this specialist ministry occurring in their group and given ongoing assistance from those with expertise.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **SCREENING PROCEDURES**

#### **1. A Screening Procedure**

A screening procedure has been established to maximise the potential for care and minimise the possibility of abuse by the NSW Government, it is called the New Working With Children Check June 2013. The procedure is a requirement for all those that work or volunteer in Religious services or are a Youth Worker. New Life have defined these people as **all volunteer leaders and carers who are 18 years or older and involved in working with babies, children's or young people; all Session members; Cell Group Leaders; Pastoral Carers and all paid staff of the church. The check must be completed prior to the person taking up the role or appointment.**

To apply for a check see <http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/Working-with-children/New-Working-With-Children-Check/apply/-apply>

#### **Application Form**

The procedure involves: the completion of an application to serve in a position of leadership. These are available from the Childsafe Co-ordinator or the Church office. **For those under 18 years of age involved in leading and caring for children, either adult supervision must be present or the minor's parents will need to sign a form on behalf of the minor.**

#### **2. Why a Screening Procedure?**

***To provide the best protection for those who are in our care.***

The church is committed to ensuring that it provides a safe and secure environment and safe programs for all participants.

As the church is an open community that can provide immediate and direct access to children, young people and adults, a screening procedure is imperative to protect those most vulnerable to possible abuse.

The relatively minor inconvenience involved in establishing a screening procedure is a small price to pay for protecting the individuals and the church from the devastation that often accompanies an incident of abuse.

#### **3. The Police Check within the Screening Procedure**

a. A Police Check has become a common practice among most organisations that are involved in care and supervision. While it does not guarantee that a person is a fit and suitable character for roles of leadership and care, it does ensure that those who are known to the Police who have been involved in child or sexual abuse, will not have access to positions of leadership and care within the church.

#### 4. Screening Procedure Steps and Considerations

- a. The screening procedure is to be explained to all leaders, carers, children's workers and youth workers upon taking up their position.
- b. Information of the 'Application Form' and the 'Safety & Care' policy to be handed out to all leaders and carers.
- c. Session has appointed the Childsafe Coordinator as the person to manage a check list of all leaders and carers, session members and paid staff, with information that covers: (1) briefing or training session; (2) Application Form; and (3) Working with Children Check clearance.
- d. **The Working with Children Check (WWC) & Application form need only be completed once every five years. All new leaders and carers are to complete the procedure prior to taking up the role or appointment.** For those who have come from inter-state a NSW Working with Children Check must be completed. Where costs are incurred for the Police Check reimbursement is available from the Church Treasurer should it be applied for.
- e. The check list can be supervised by the appointed person, though only the Pastor or Church Childsafe Coordinator should view the Police Checks. These are to be stored in a locked file so that confidentiality is respected.

#### 5. Further Safeguards

***Having an individual go through the screening procedure is not in itself enough to protect our church community.*** Therefore, the following steps are also taken:

- a. Each referee listed on the application is contacted by the Church Administrator or one of the pastors and a written record of each contact is made.
- b. Each church in which the applicant has indicated prior experience is contacted and the applicant's suitability is discussed, ensuring that all comments are recorded and filed.
- c. All staff (volunteer and paid) are made aware of the child abuse reporting requirements.
- d. Leadership and carer positions are only open to persons who have been adherents in good standing of the church **for no less than six to twelve months, to be determined at the discretion of the Session.** This gives the church an opportunity to evaluate applicants, and will help to prevent potential abusers seeking immediate access to children. Where people are transferring from another church the pastor of their previous church will be contacted to obtain a reference as a matter of course.
- e. The church must treat as strictly confidential all applications and records of contacts with churches or referees. Such information should

be marked 'confidential' and all personnel files should be kept in a locked cabinet for purposes of confidentiality.

- f. All leaders and carers must complete Childsafe training within their first six months of appointment.

**Consistency with Government Requirements.**

Nothing in this document contradicts applicable State and Federal Legislation. This means that church leadership and organisational procedures should uphold the 'laws of the land' providing they do not contradict Scripture. Therefore guidelines outlined here should be compliant with relevant legislation.

## APPENDIX 2

### *Guidelines for Crèche Care:*

*The following guidelines apply to all crèche carers.*

#### 1. ***Carer's training and Information***

**All carers in crèche must be over 18 years of age.**

- Crèche carers will meet once a year to have the Policy for Safety and Care as well as crèche guidelines explained.
- All crèche carers should make it their responsibility to familiarise themselves with these guidelines.
- All new carers will be informed of guidelines by the Crèche Coordinator before their commencement as a carer and complete a safety check.
- The guidelines for Crèche Operation should be displayed appropriately within the crèche.

#### 2. ***Crèche Guidelines***

- Carers are responsible to ensure a safe environment for all children.
- Carers must not exercise corporal punishment or physically strike a child. Behavioural problems should be followed up with parents.
- Two carers, at least, **must always** be rostered on crèche.
- Where appropriate, females are to be responsible for toileting children and changing nappies, except for fathers dealing with their own children
- Toilet doors are to be left unlocked and ajar when toileting children.
- Whenever possible carers are to remain open to public view when dealing with children.

## APPENDIX 3

### **Biblical Framework for the Policy of Safety and Care**

***Dignity of Man:*** All human beings have been made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26,27) and are therefore capable of deep interpersonal relationships. Human beings have an inherent dignity, given by God himself which carries with it an implied right to safety and respect (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9).

***Ideal of the Family Unit:*** Marriage is part of God's basic creation order (Genesis 2:18, 24). God intended it to be a lifelong, one-flesh, monogamous union (Mark 10; Matthew 19; Luke 16), in which children are nurtured to maturity. Love and respect for each other are fundamental values for family life (Ephesians 5).

***The Sin of all Human Beings:*** Ever since the fall (Genesis 3:1-8) all aspects of being human have been affected by sin - our wills and our thoughts, and our interpersonal and institutional relationships, including family and church, are all prone to evil. Thus, all human relationships are tainted by sin and in desperate need of redeeming (Romans 3:10, 14-17).

***The Call to a Redeemed Life:*** Deliverance from sin and its perversion depends on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Christ, the damaged relationships can be restored, not just between God and man, but between people in the family and in the community (Ephesians 2:13-14). Sin must be challenged. Even though the Spirit convicts people of sin, believers are also called to challenge sin and call for repentance (Matthew 18:15-17). While God's love in Christ calls us to repentance, forgiveness and ultimately reconciliation, it is through the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people that Christ's redeeming work has a real impact. Christians, as representatives of Christ and empowered by His Spirit, are called to be active in the community, seeking the redemption of the whole world (Colossians 1:15-20).

***Seeking Justice for the Oppressed:*** Justice and care for the oppressed has always been part of God's agenda for the world (Luke 4:14-21). He is angry with all forms of injustice and oppression and calls His people to stand against it (Psalm 82; Micah 6:8; Matthew 5:7; Matthew 25:31f).

## APPENDIX 4

### PROCEDURES FOR CO-ORDINATORS OR LEADERS IN CHARGE

Co-ordinators or leaders in charge of the following groups within our church communities need to be diligent in carrying out this policy of safety and care.

Session  
Deacons  
Cell Groups  
Pastoral Carers  
Youth groups  
JAM  
Children's Church  
Playgroups  
Creche

Anyone child minding for Bible Study groups, camps or other activities.

1. The **co-ordinator or leader in charge is responsible to keep the Church Childsafe Coordinator informed** of all new children's workers, youth workers, carers or leaders.
2. **Before a new appointment is made**, the co-ordinator or leader in charge must give the person a copy of this policy, together with the Application Form for a Position of Leadership. Both are available from the church office. Completed application forms and police checks need to be submitted to to the Childsafe Coordinator **prior to taking up the role or appointment**. The forms will be stored in a locked file for confidentiality.
3. The Childsafe Coordinator will send a letter of confirmation to the co-ordinator or leader in charge when references and WWC checks have been received and the appointment can go ahead.
4. The co-ordinator or leader in charge should spend some time with the new worker discussing this booklet. It is expected that the co-ordinator will be familiar with the policy.
5. Whenever a training session or workshop is held, the co-ordinator or leader in charge should encourage all leaders and carers to attend.

**RISK ASSESSMENT FORM**

**To be completed by leaders of any activities where there is a risk of injury to leaders and/or participants.**

**Name of Group:** .....

**Name of Leader in Charge:** .....

**Names of other leaders who will attend:**

.....  
.....

**Number of participants anticipated:** .....**Age range:** .....

**Date of proposed activity:** .....

**Nature of proposed activity** .....

**Location and description of proposed activity:**

**COMPLETE THIS FORM THOUGHTFULLY AND HONESTLY,  
& FORWARD IT ONTO THE CHILDSAFE CO-ORDINATOR.**

Assess the risk.	What is the calculated level of risk?  HIGH  MEDIUM  LOW	Consider the probability of risk, exposure to the risk and possible consequences.
List ways of reducing the calculated level of risk. (e.g. cancel activity, have more leaders present, raise age range, choose a different site)		
Do the decisions made in the previous section reduce the risk to an acceptable level?	If no, consider further ways of reducing possible risk.	
Do the decisions made create any secondary hazards? (e.g. further to drive, higher to climb, deeper water.)	If yes, consider how to reduce the secondary hazards.	
Do leaders have the skills and/or training to run the activity safely?	If yes, no further action.  If no, make arrangements to acquire skills and/or training.	
For water based activities, do you have competent and confident swimmers familiar with water safety?	If yes, no further action.  If no, the water based activity should not be included in the program.	
If there is a risk that is not at an acceptable level, is it necessary for the activity to be carried out?	Consider alternative activities.	

CONGREGATION: \_\_\_\_\_

ADVENTURE ACTIVITY PERMISSION FORM

*To be completed by parents of participants under 18 years of age.*

**DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY** (TO BE COMPLETED BY LEADER BEFORE PRINTING OFF PERMISSION FORMS – include location, duration and list of activities. Also give name and contact phone number of leader in charge. Thanks.)

Name of participant

Home Address

Date of Birth

  



**Emergency Contact**

Name	Relationship	Home Phone	Work Phone

**Does your son/daughter have any allergies?**

Penicillin  Any Foods  Other Drugs  Bites/Stings

Other Allergies:

**Any other relevant information the leaders should be aware of:**

**Medical Consent**

In the event of accident or illness when it is impracticable or impossible to communicate with me, I understand the leader in charge will arrange such medical or surgical treatment as may be deemed necessary.

**Participation**

I consent to my child’s participation in this activity. I understand that the activity may involve some risk. (N.B. Activities will be led by leaders to whom safety is of the utmost importance).

I agree to my son/daughter returning home if necessary in the event of illness, injury or non co-operation and agree to pay any expenses involved or to come and collect my son/daughter from the activity.

I agree to reimburse the church for any hospital, medical or ambulance expenses incurred by the church on behalf of my son/daughter.

Signed (parent/guardian): ..... Date: .....

CONGREGATION: \_\_\_\_\_

**MEDICAL PERMISSION FORM**

*To be completed by parents of participants under 18 years of age each year and must be available at each and every meeting or activity where the participant is present.*

Name of participant

Home Address

Date of Birth

  



Emergency Contact

Name	Relationship	Home Phone	Work Phone

Your mobile phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your son/daughter have any allergies?

Penicillin  Any Foods  Other Drugs  Bites/Stings

Other Allergies:

Any other relevant information the leaders should be aware of:

**Medical Consent**

In the event of accident or illness when it is impracticable or impossible to communicate with me, I understand the leader in charge will arrange such medical or surgical treatment as may be deemed necessary. I agree to my son/daughter returning home if necessary in the event of illness, injury or non co-operation and agree to pay any expenses involved or to come and collect my son/daughter from the activity. I agree to reimburse the church for any hospital, medical or ambulance expenses incurred by the church on behalf of my son/daughter.

**I agree to the church obtaining emergency medical care for my son/daughter in the event they are not able to contact me.**

Signed (parent/guardian): ..... Date: .....

**PERMISSION TO BE A PASSENGER IN A CAR DRIVEN BY A GREEN P PLATE DRIVER**

I give permission for my son/daughter to be a passenger in a car which is driven by a person on a provisional licence (**Green P Plate**).

Signed (parent/guardian): ..... Date: .....