



GUIDELINES FOR CHILD SAFETY

These Guidelines have been prepared to fulfil our church's commitment to make its communities safe places for children and all people who participate in its life and ministry, as an outworking of our pastoral, biblical, legal and moral responsibilities.

SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS

When Jesus spoke to his disciples, he said they were not to be like the rulers of the day who used their authority to lord it over others. They were to be servants of others, even as Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:42-45).

When Peter wrote to the Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor, he reminded them of their identity in Christ as God's chosen people, who had been sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:1-17). The call to be holy is reflected in both the Old and New Testaments as the appropriate response to God's grace. Christians live according to the knowledge that they have been created by God and redeemed by Christ.

When Paul wrote to the Philippian Christians he rejoiced in their fellowship and prayed that their love might grow in knowledge and discernment so that they might be enabled to live pure and blameless lives for the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:9-11). They live out God's love in their contact with others, especially those to whom they minister in Christ's name.

The Church is the fellowship that nurtures and sustains Christians as they seek to follow Christ faithfully and participate in God's mission. Its leaders especially are to be examples of Christian faith and obedience as they exercise their vocation, in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

CHILDREN'S ENTITLEMENT TO BE SAFE AND PROTECTED

Children are entitled to be safe and protected. They have the right to be respected, listened to and their particular needs addressed in all church activities, whether mixed aged or child specific. Attention to individual needs must consider any disability and cultural aspects.

Ministry where children are involved requires absolute trustworthiness.



If you have overall authority for children's ministry, this responsibility cannot be delegated for the implementation and maintenance of proper systems for the safety and wellbeing of children participating in its pastoral ministry.

When you are exercising a pastoral ministry involving children, you have responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of children in your care.

You have authority over children because of your position and power because of your greater age, maturity, physical size and life experience. Abuse arises from the misuse of authority or power. Any form of child abuse is always wrong, and City on a Hill takes a zero tolerance stance.

Due to the inherent imbalance of power, children under the age of 16 cannot give consent to sexual activity.

Appropriate physical contact is important for children's healthy development.

RECOGNISING THE CHARACTERISTICS AND EFFECTS OF CHILD ABUSE

You need to be aware of the signs, symptoms and characteristics of child abuse and its impact on children. Abuse of a child can be categorised as emotional and psychological, grooming, physical, sexual, or spiritual. It can also arise from neglect, bullying or harassment. The signs and symptoms can include (but not limited to):

- emotional and psychological abuse—low self-esteem, apathy, an over readiness to relate to anyone even strangers, unduly aggressive behaviour, withdrawn behaviour;
- physical abuse—bruises, bites, burns and scalds, fractures;
- sexual abuse—a level of sexual knowledge or desire for either contact or distance inappropriate to the child's age, self-harm, social isolation, and a sudden onset of soiling, wetting or other behavioural changes;
- spiritual abuse—low self-esteem, high levels of anxiety and fear, excessive deference to a leader and isolation from former friends and family members;
- neglect—failure of a child to grow within the normally accepted pattern, failure of a parent or guardian to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care and supervision.
- bullying or harassment—low self-esteem, loss of trust in others, apathy, an over readiness to relate to anyone even strangers, unduly aggressive behaviour, withdrawn behaviour.

Sexual abuse of a child is often preceded by grooming, although grooming in and of itself is also a crime characterised with trauma impacts regardless of whether further forms of abuse occur. Grooming actions are



designed to establish an emotional connection to lower the child's inhibitions through the development of a relationship with the child, and increased opportunity to see the child. Grooming involves psychological manipulation that is usually very subtle, drawn out, calculated, controlling and premeditated. Typically, grooming occurs incrementally: accessing the victim's vulnerabilities, initiating and maintaining the abuse, and concealing the abuse. Grooming offences may target online or other electronic communications, subjecting children to child exploitation material, and/or using intoxicating substances to engage children for the purpose of sexual activity.

The sexual abuse of a child commonly has the following characteristics:

- it usually starts with something minor and gradually builds up to more involved behaviours through a process of grooming;
- it is secretive and generally known only to the abuser and victim making it extremely difficult to detect;
- it is perpetrated by someone known to the child and/or held in a position of trust by the child or their parents or guardians; and
- it is rarely a self-contained or one-off incident but rather part of an ongoing relationship that is recruiting, corrupting and distorting.

The abuse of a child commonly causes psychological and spiritual harm and is likely to lead to the impairment of their social, emotional, psychological, cognitive, spiritual and intellectual development and/or disturbed behaviour.

The effects of child abuse extend well beyond the abuser and their primary victims. The families of the victim and abusers as well as their communities can also experience a high degree of distress when revelations of abuse emerge. Often, they can deny the disclosure and so reject the victim rather than face reality. Once the reality is confronted, the community will commonly experience profound shock, guilt about failing to protect the primary victim, deep hurt and disillusionment.

RECOGNISING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SEXUAL OFFENDERS

You need to be aware of the characteristics of sexual offenders. A sexual offender may be a friend, a family member, a neighbour, a peer, or a person in authority. Sexual offenders generally:

- look for and take situational opportunities;
- do not stop unless there is some intervening factor;
- believe or assert that the victim is complicit or a willing participant;



- attempt to deny, justify, minimise or excuse their behaviour by:
 - claiming their behaviour was an expression of love for the victim;
 - claiming their behaviour was a result of their childhood abuse;
 - claiming their behaviour was influenced by stress, the use of alcohol or other substances; and
 - blaming the victim;
- enjoy the activity, despite claims to the contrary; and
- are repeat offenders.

Sexual offenders who target vulnerable adults and children will often undertake a grooming process as a precursor to abusive behaviour.

ENSURING THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN

You need to take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children for whom you have overall responsibility or who are in your care. This means you will need to prepare a risk management plan which considers, but is not limited to, the following issues:

- screening and selection of personnel;
- your role and capacity to perform it;
- use of external service providers;
- supervision;
- planning and conduct of activities;
- venue;
- health and safety;
- transport;
- disciplinary arrangements;
- physical contact;
- photographs and images; and
- record keeping.

These issues are considered in the following paragraphs.

SCREENING AND SELECTION OF PERSONNEL



If you have responsibility for compliance with civil and church screening and selection requirements, you should exercise care with the selection of leaders involved in mixed age or children's activities. You should ensure that any parents or guardians assisting with these activities are screened.

You must consult the Compliance Director of City on a Hill before you appoint someone who has:

- been acquitted of a charge of an offence against a child;
- had a charge of an offence against a child not proceed;
- had a prohibited status under applicable child protection legislation lifted; or
- been the subject of Church disciplinary proceedings involving child abuse.

YOUR ROLE AND CAPACITY TO PERFORM IT

You need to recognise your own limits and not undertake any ministry that is beyond your competence or certification or that is not part of the role for which you have been or are being trained. Arrange for any such ministry to be provided by an experienced person or specialist agency. This applies particularly to outdoor or adventure activities such as canoeing, abseiling and hiking. Refer any child who requires specialised help (e.g. counselling for depression, abuse or addiction) to an appropriately qualified person or agency.

While children should be able to trust and confide in you — and you should expect to develop relationships of this character with children — avoid fostering inappropriate dependence on the part of a child.

Encourage children to develop leadership skills and undertake leadership roles that are appropriate for people of their age.

Encourage and ensure there are avenues for children to use their voice and be heard.

USE OF EXTERNAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

When you engage or use an external service provider for an activity (e.g. when you engage a specialist in outdoor education or a speaker for a camp), you should:

- make reasonable enquiries as to whether they have been screened and selected in accordance with civil and any church requirements;
- ensure that they are only used in a supplemental capacity; and
- wherever practicable, ensure that they are not left alone with any child.



SUPERVISION/CHILD-ADULT RATIOS

The degree of supervision required will vary according to the nature and environment of the activity, the age and maturity of the children and the size of the group. Having multiple leaders to ensure that supervision and accountability standards are maintained is vitally important. You should:

- clearly distinguish the different levels of responsibility between you and any other supervisor and ensure that these differences are understood;
- consider the extent of supervision required taking into account:
 - the age, number, ability and gender mix of the children; and
 - the venue, time, duration and nature of the activity;
 - the individual characteristics and needs of children, such as disabilities, ethnicity and cultural considerations.
- have a register of all children with contact details and parents' or guardians' names for emergencies; and
- monitor and periodically review the application of Church child protection procedures.

ACTIVITIES

You should identify and minimise all potential hazards before embarking on any activity with children. This includes:

- being aware of the fire safety and evacuation procedures;
- ensuring that emergency exits on church premises are clearly marked and never obstructed or internally locked;
- ensuring the cultural needs of indigenous and culturally diverse children are considered;
- ensuring the needs of children with disabilities are considered;
- not permitting smoking in any Church premises where the activity is held; and
- not knowingly permitting children with serious contagious diseases to attend the activity.

Games or activities that emphasise gender, physical, intellectual, linguistic or cultural differences should be assessed for their appropriateness. Think about what message children may learn from the way events are organised and conducted. Consider games that are inclusive of all children.

You should review in their entirety aural and visual materials, such as videos, films, computer games, graphics, photographs and lyrics, to ensure that any elements containing violence, sexual activity or lifestyle are



appropriate for the intended audience and the values of the Church. Exercise care if a film or computer game has been recommended by the Office of Film and Literature Classification as unsuitable for viewing or playing by children of a particular age (e.g. MA, M and PG classifications). In assessing whether something is suitable you should take into account the age of the youngest child present. If in doubt, seek the advice of a supervisor or colleague.

To minimise the possibility of children being harmed, give careful consideration to any activities or games that require children to act alone or in pairs independent of leaders.

Ensure that no children's activity includes:

- secret initiation rites and ceremonies;
- nudity or engagement in sexual conduct; or
- media classified by the Office of Film and Literature Classification as being unsuitable for children; or
- the use or availability of any substance or product whose supply to or use by children is prohibited by law.

When taking children away from church premises, obtain the written consent of a parent or guardian and keep them informed of the place and timing of the event and child safety practice. If you can, include parents or guardians in a leadership team of mixed gender.

When meeting a child privately, you should:

- have parental or guardian consent, where practicable;
- ensure, where appropriate, that a parent, guardian or suitable adult is present;
- inform a member of the pastoral staff, an adult with a position of responsibility in the Church or another suitable adult of the time, location and duration of the meeting;
- not invite or have children to your home or visit children in their home when no other adult is present; and
- make a record of the time, location, duration and circumstances of any meeting where it is impracticable to follow these guidelines.

VENUE

Avoid working alone or in isolation with children. You should ensure that:

- all activities have defined boundaries that are easily observed or patrolled;



- all aspects of children's activities are open to observation;
- children are not permitted to leave church premises unsupervised; and
- where individual or small group ministry is needed, it occurs in the presence of other adults, in a public place or in a location with high visibility.

When events require children to sleep over, you should ensure that where possible:

- parents or guardians are involved in the events and their supervision;
- males and females are in separate sleeping accommodation;
- sleeping accommodation is supervised by more than one person, preferably including a parent or guardian or another adult of the same gender as the children being supervised;
- supervisors do not sleep in close personal proximity to a child, unless they are a parent or guardian of the child, and
- all adults attending are appropriately screened for child related work.

Venues should allow for the privacy of all parties to be respected, particularly when changing clothes, washing and toileting. If you need to wash or toilet a child, tell another adult what you are doing.

Ensure that the risk management plan includes relevant contact details (e.g. emergency services and specialised help) and that a first aid kit appropriate to the activity is available. In the case of camps and similar activities, ensure that at least one adult present has first aid training.

Do not administer prescription medications to a child without the written consent of a parent or guardian. This does not include use of an EpiPen or Ventolin or when following the instructions from a paramedic or 000 representative.

Obtain information from parents or guardians about the particular physical and mental health or safety needs of children in your care (e.g. allergies, depression).

TRANSPORT

When making transport arrangements, take reasonable steps to ensure that:

- all drivers or operators are licensed, screened, responsible, experienced and are not impaired by alcohol or any other mind-altering or addictive substance; and



- all motor vehicles and other forms of transport used are registered, insured, safe and fitted with appropriate child restraints or safety devices (e.g. seat belts, life jackets).

An appropriate licence includes a P2 licence ('green P').

To the extent practicable, avoid being alone with a child in a motor vehicle or driving a child home unaccompanied. If such a situation is unavoidable, inform the parent or guardian or another suitable adult of the trip and the reason for it.

DISCIPLINE

If you have overall responsibility in a Church body, you should ensure that:

- there is a strategy to prevent child abuse from occurring during Church activities. This includes giving age-appropriate warnings to children about their own behaviour; and
- parents or guardians are advised that abuse of any child during children's activities will not be tolerated.

If you have overall authority for children's ministry, you should ensure that a disciplinary strategy is developed, made known and implemented.

Appendix A details important steps to take when disciplining children.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

In general—excluding circumstances such as immediate physical danger or medical emergency—physical contact should be initiated by the child or occur with their permission. When you make physical contact with a child, be very careful that you respect the child's feelings and privacy.

Ensure that any physical contact you have with children is of a non-sexual nature and appropriate to the situation. Avoid any physical contact that is sexually stimulating, or that may be construed as sexually stimulating. Children may or may not be aware of creating such situations. It is your responsibility to be alert for such situations and to cease any inappropriate physical contact immediately.

Appendix B details what is appropriate and inappropriate when making physical contact with children.

COMMUNICATION



If you have overall responsibility for a church, you should ensure there are procedures for those engaged in pastoral ministry to children which deal with the use of technology to communicate with children as part of that ministry.

When considering using technology for communication, you should apply the same principles as you would in any other form of communication with children.

You should take care that:

- it is an appropriate way to communicate with a child;
- it is an appropriate way to communicate about the matter;
- you are sensitive to the impact of your words, images and actions on the child and any other person who may access it;
- you do not use sexually suggestive, sexually explicit or offensive language or images; and
- the circumstances of the communication, including the language and images used, do not suggest your relationship with the child is inappropriate.

Appendix C details risks associated with using technology in communication with children.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND IMAGES

If you have overall authority in a church, you should ensure that there is a procedure requiring everyone for whom you are responsible to obtain the permission of relevant parents and guardians before making or using images (including photographs and videos) of children who are engaged in children's activities. The form of permission should clearly indicate the intended use of the images.

RECORD KEEPING

If you have overall authority in a church, you should ensure that any church screening documents:

- are treated with confidentiality and never left where they can be accessed by unauthorised persons;
- where kept on computer, are password protected and stored for an indefinite period of time with access limited to authorised persons; and
- where kept in paper form, are stored separately from any other documents and locked in secure place for an indefinite period of time, with access limited to authorised persons.



If you have overall authority in a church, you should:

- ensure that a register of attendance of children and leaders and their emergency contact details is kept for each pastoral ministry involving children;
- ensure that you have a register of suitable screening for everyone to whom the Code of Conduct applies;
- consider including such registers in the Church archives; and
- keep and store in a secure place all permission forms and records relating to discipline and private meetings.

If you are exercising a pastoral ministry involving children, you should keep a register of attendance of the children for whom you are responsible.

APPENDIX A – DISCIPLINING CHILDREN

When a child's behaviour requires correction, either for the safety and wellbeing of themselves or the group, it is important that:

- a warning precedes any discipline, where the situation permits;
- the discipline is explained to the child;
- the child is given an opportunity to explain;
- the discipline is appropriate to the occasion and age of the child;
- the form of discipline is not corporal punishment, does not ridicule or humiliate, or is not otherwise abusive;
- very young children are not isolated as a form of discipline;
- physical restraint is only used to protect children from harm or to avoid an accident;
- when physical restraint is used, a record is kept that identifies the restraint used, the person using the restraint and child involved and any witnesses, and sets out the incident's circumstances; and
- the child's parents or guardians are informed of the circumstances of the incident and discipline; and
- you make a record of the circumstances of the incident and discipline; and
- you make a record of the circumstances of the incident and discipline.

APPENDIX B – CHILDREN AND PHYSICAL CONTACT

You need to be very careful when making physical contact with children. Appropriate contact includes:



- bending down to the child's eye level, speaking kindly and listening attentively;
- gaining permission before hugging a child and respecting their right to refuse;
- taking a child's hand and leading them to an activity;
- comforting a child by placing an arm around their shoulder and giving a gentle squeeze from the side;
- praising or welcoming a child by holding the child's two hands in yours;
- patting the child on the head, hand, back or shoulder in affirmation; and
- holding a preschool child who is crying, provided that they want to be held.

Inappropriate contact includes:

- kissing or coaxing a child to kiss you;
- extended hugging or tickling;
- touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimming costume, specifically the buttocks, thighs, breasts or groin areas; and
- carrying older children, sitting them on your lap or having them rub up next to you.

APPENDIX C – RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH USING TECHNOLOGY IN COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN

You, and other people – including children – may communicate using:

- texting and picture messaging;
- email;
- instant messenger services and chat rooms;
- video conferencing;
- blogs and internet forums;
- websites; and
- group social networking sites.

Remember information posted online is tracked and can be retrieved. Dangers associated with the use of communication technology with children are not always appreciated by people. These dangers include:

- ignoring personal security settings on social networking sites;
- disclosing contact details or images of the child in the communication;
- being unable to determine if people are who they say they are;



- exposing the child to unwanted or inappropriate information;
- the child becoming a victim of cyberbullying; and
- sexual predators gaining access to the child.

You can assist children to stay safe when using technology to communicate with others by:

- educating children and their parents or guardians about the risks associated with the use of this technology;
- encouraging children to exercise care in disclosing personal information about themselves and others such as their contact details;
- encouraging children to talk about anything that worries them with their parents or guardians, older siblings, friends, and members of the Church who are bound by the Code of Conduct and with whom they have a pastoral relationship instead of posting their problems in a chat room or blog; and
- encouraging children to talk about anything they see or experience online that worries them.

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