

CHURCH PROTECTION POLICY
WAGIN VINEYARD CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
PROTECTION POLICY
Last Updated: 10TH JANUARY 2020

PURPOSE

We are committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all its Employees, Members, Visitors, Volunteers and particularly to Children, Aged and Vulnerable People. Therefore, we have written, adopted and implemented a client protection policy that reflects our desire and dedication to protect all people from abuse and to stop abuse when we become aware of it.

DEFINITIONS

Abuse - Any act (including neglect) that endangers the physical or emotional health or development of a child or youth. Abuse includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. See examples in Appendix C.

Church – Wagin Vineyard Christian Fellowship

Coordinator - Staff member(s) appointed by the senior pastor to oversee the different ministries.

Ministries - All events and activities that are coordinated by the staff of the church in the performance of their duties.

Policy - This Protection Policy

Staff - Any person employed by the church who participates in ministries in the performance of their duties.

Volunteers - Any person not employed by the church who participates in the church's ministries.

WHO MUST COMPLY WITH THIS POLICY

All staff and volunteers who participate in the ministries of the church must comply with this Policy.

SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

This Policy covers the following items: recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers, training, support and supervision, mandatory reporting of suspected abuse, and the church's code of conduct.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Policy –

All staff and volunteers must be investigated and approved by the senior pastor and coordinator before participating in any ministries.

Procedure –

1. All applicants must have attended the church as a regular member for at least 3 months before being allowed to participate in any ministries.
2. An applicant will submit the following material for review by the coordinator and senior pastor:
 - a) A National Police check issued in the applicant's name .

- (b) A signed declaration that the applicant has read, understood and agreed to be bound by this Policy (as outlined in Appendix A) and the Leaders Code of Conduct (Appendix B) .
3. The coordinator will ask the applicant if they have ever been involved in or accused of any untoward acts of abuse. The applicant's response will be noted and provided to the senior pastor.
 4. The coordinator and senior pastor will review the information provided and make a determination of the applicant's suitability. All of the applicant's information will be held in strictest confidence and will not be made available to any other person.
 5. The applicant will not be allowed to participate in ministries until the senior pastor has approved their suitability
 6. A register of all applications will be stored on church premises along with their signed declaration, and notes regarding their acceptance or denial of suitability by the senior pastor.
 7. Pastors will keep a register of the expiration dates of the WWCC Cards of staff and volunteers, and ensure the WWCC Cards are kept valid.

TRAINING

Policy -

The church will facilitate ongoing education for its staff and volunteers as necessary to ensure compliance with this Policy.

Procedure –

1. Coordinators will annually facilitate an educational session at the beginning of the calendar year for all staff and volunteers. The session will include a review of this Policy and the Code of Conduct.
2. All staff and volunteers who commence their participation in children and youth ministries during the calendar year will receive training from the coordinator on this Policy.
3. All staff and volunteers will sign an acknowledgement that they attended the education session. Their continued participation will be conditional upon their attendance to these sessions.
4. Coordinators will advise the senior pastor in writing of their compliance with this training procedure for all staff and volunteers who participate in the children and youth ministries.

SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT

Policy –

The church will provide ongoing accountability and feedback to staff and volunteers to ensure their performance complies with this Policy.

Procedures –

1. All staff will have formal performance appraisals annually with the senior pastor
2. Staff will participate in education and training programs to improve their knowledge of abuse and best practice in responding to allegations of abuse.
3. Coordinators will formally observe new staff and volunteers within 6 months of commencement and submit their review to the senior pastor, as deemed necessary
4. Staff and volunteers will be encouraged by the coordinators to ask questions and provide feedback to the coordinator and/or senior pastor.

MANDATORY REPORTING OF SUSPECTED ABUSE

Policy –

The church has a moral responsibility to review all suspected instances of abuse and notify protection agencies where necessary.

Procedures –

1. If a staff member or volunteer suspects abuse, they are to report to the coordinator or senior pastor immediately. There are various ways in which you may become aware of abuse, such as:
 - a. A person discloses (tells you he/she has been physically or sexually abused;
 - b. Someone else tells you (another child, sibling, relative, friend of the family); or
 - c. Observation of the person's behaviour or knowledge of people generally leads to suspicion.
2. The person is not to be interviewed by any staff member or volunteer.
3. If a person discloses abuse to a staff member or volunteer, then the staff member or volunteer should:
 - a. Look at the person directly.
 - b. Accept what the person says and tell them that you believe them.
 - c. Be aware while you listen that the person may have been threatened.
 - d. Do not press for information or ask leading questions (e.g., Did they touch you?).
 - e. Reassure the person that they are right to tell you and that you take what they say to you very seriously
 - f. Let the person know what you are going to do next, who you are going to tell, and roughly what will happen next.
 - g. Stay calm – do not overreact.
 - h. Call the police if the person is in immediate danger.
4. The staff member or volunteer will keep their suspicion completely confidential and not disclose it to any other person other than the coordinator, senior pastor and proper legal authorities.
5. A suspected abuse report will be written by the staff member or volunteer and provided to the coordinator or senior pastor within 24 hours of the staff member or volunteer becoming aware of the suspected abuse (see Appendix D).
6. The coordinator and senior pastor will determine the proper steps to report the suspected abuse to a designated reporting agency.
7. Any staff member or volunteer accused of abuse will be immediately suspended of their responsibilities. Staff members will be suspended with pay.
8. Our insurer will also be notified of a potential issue of abuse.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Policy

All people will be cared for in a secure and transparent manner.

1. Visiting

a. The Two Adult Rule – One experienced adult will be present when visiting at all times with at least one helper.

2. Prayer ministry is to be conducted with 2 people present: Male to male, female to female.

A couple may minister together with either sex. If a person wants privacy and a one on one prayer ministry this is to be conducted within sight of another person.

3. Touching and interaction

a. Staff and volunteers will always use language that affirms the people as important members of the community.

b. All staff and volunteers will refrain from touching a person in an inappropriate manner.

Appropriate touching includes brief hugs, light touches on the shoulder and a flat hand lightly placed on head or back. It is not permitted to touch a person in an area that would normally be covered by swimming bathers.

4. Ministry activities off church premises

a. For all ministry activities off church premises, there will be a ratio of no less than one adult to every 8 youth and a ratio of one adult to every 4 children.

b. Drivers will not transport a child or youth without another person in the car at all times.

c. Written permission is obtained from a parent/guardian if transporting children.

5. Camps

a. Where possible, leaders will supervise children and youth of the same sex.

b. For sleeping arrangements, supervision will be given by leaders of the same sex (two leaders where possible).

c. Children and youth are not allowed to get into bed with another camper or with a leader.

d. Children and youth of the opposite sex will not share a bedroom after age 5.

e. Access to bathrooms, toilets or bunkrooms of the opposite sex is not allowed by leaders or campers (except for leaders where there is an extreme emergency).

f. Health and safety rules of the campsite being used will be adhered to.

g. Medical and safety (eg. swimming) forms must be filled out for activities longer than three hours for children or five hours for youth.

APPENDIX A

DECLARATION

To be signed by all staff, volunteers, leaders and helpers involved in the area of ministry at Wagin Vineyard Christian Fellowship and Set Free Weekends, including volunteer drivers.

A copy to be kept by the worker and on church file.

Name of worker: _____

Position: _____

Declaration:

I declare that:

1. I am able to accept the leadership of the Senior Pastor and his appointed leaders under whom I will be working.
2. I will work within the procedure as laid out in this protection policy document.
3. I have not been accused or convicted of any offence involving physical or sexual abuse of anyone.
4. I understand that if a complaint be levelled against me while engaged in any church activity, the police or other legal authority will automatically be asked to investigate.
5. I hereby give my full permission for the Police or Commissioner for Children and Young People to do a check on convictions of child or youth abuse and any sexual offences
6. I hereby declare that all information given is true and correct.
7. Referees: (someone who has known you at least five years)

Name Phone number

Name Phone number

Signed: _____

Print name: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B

Leaders Code of Conduct 2017

This Leaders Code of Conduct outlines ministry appropriate boundaries, rather than assuming that people know the boundaries. It applies to all leaders of our both volunteers and paid workers.

As the leaders of this church we acknowledge that everyone who attends our churches needs to be confident that they will be cared for, nurtured and encouraged as they grow and at the same time, protected from spiritual, physical, & emotional harm, therefore we commit to the following ministry standards.

a. We minister out of a relationship with God by:

- joining regularly in the life and ministry of the Church.
- studying the Scriptures in private and in groups.
- praying regularly in private and in fellowship with and for the people and ministry of the Church.
- giving of our time and finances to the work of the Church, as an expression of your gratitude to God.

b. We serve others in the context of healthy relationships by:

- loving and caring for our families; paying attention to the effect of ministry on them.
- treating others with respect; teach and exercise authority respectfully.
- upholding confidentiality; do not disclose to anyone (including spouse), any confidential information without the consent of the person providing the information. (There is an exception where there is a legal obligation or a duty of care issue.)
- being a team player; cooperating with other ministry leaders, there will be areas that overlap and someone else may have the advice that you need.
- using words that build up; do not ridicule or embarrass people.
- avoiding ongoing counselling of people with whom we have pastoral (ministry) relationships.
- making alternative arrangements for pastoral ministry for any person with whom develop an appropriate romantic relationship.

c. As Christian Leaders we will:

- be accountable to our team, watch out for each other and protect each other's integrity, e.g. never alone with one child or vulnerable adult; never minister single male to female, female to male, two female to a male or two male to a female unless in a public church service where others are present.
- treat every program participant equally, 'no favourites'.
- communicate with integrity, including accountable and wise use of electronic communication, commit to following our team guidelines for electronic communication.
- acknowledge when we are out of our depth &/or do not possess the required skills in difficult pastoral situations, such as helping a victim of abuse, or a person who needs professional counselling, and seek help from a supervisor or denominational leader.

- not take property belonging to others, including intellectual property (copyright)
- not knowingly making false, misleading deceptive, or defamatory statements.
- not engage in bullying, emotional abuse, harassment, physical abuse, sexual abuse, sexual misconduct. sexual grooming or spiritual abuse of any person, including your own family.
- not act violently or intentionally provoke violence when engaged in civil disobedience.
- be responsible in our use of addictive substances and services (e.g. prescriptions/ alcohol).
- not use any prohibited substance.
- act with sexual purity. Sexuality is a gift from God. We will express our sexuality in healthy and God directed ways.
- act with financial integrity, including having accountable and transparent systems in place for in financial matters.
- not seek personal advantage or financial gain from your position, other than in wages, recognised allowances and deductions.
- disclose to the church leadership if we are or have been investigated for any criminal offences or have any knowledge of serious criminal activity.

When the code is breached

i) Minor: Everyone is capable of sin but can repent and be forgiven (1 John 1:8-9) It stands to reason then, that the code can be breached. When this happens in an area that is not a breach of civil or criminal law, simply cease the conduct. If this is difficult, the person should see their team leader or supervisor about receiving help (eg. Counselling). In some cases it may be necessary to step a person aside from their duties whilst this takes place. It is crucial to deal with such matters confidentially and sensitively.

ii) Unknown: Not all leaders will understand 'unacceptable' behaviours. Even after explaining the code some may be unaware they are exhibiting unacceptable behaviours. Leaders need to be open to correction and humble enough to modify behaviours so as to not discredit the gospel. As above, stepping a person aside from their duties may be necessary.

iii) Constant: There are breaches that are not a breach of civil or criminal law, but still unacceptable behaviour in a ministry context. Where a leader has been made aware of their behaviour and yet refuses to change:

a) the ministry coordinator meets with the person for behaviour review meetings. Communicate required behaviour change (no more than 3 meetings).

b) If behaviour continues, a small group of church leaders are to arrange a meeting to address the behaviour. Stepping aside is appropriate at this point.

c) If the behaviour/s continues beyond this meeting, then respectfully, and upholding confidentiality, the person will be stood down for a set period. They will be offered help in changing their behaviour via counselling if they are willing.

NB. Written notes of all meetings to be carefully taken and a copy given to all parties.

iv) Breaches of the law or allegations of abuse: Are to be referred to the appropriate government authorities.

APPENDIX C

DEFINITIONS AND INDICATORS OF ABUSE

Child Abuse

Child abuse is a term commonly used to refer to different types of child maltreatment, either as a single event or a series of incidents. It includes physical assault, social assault, emotional abuse and neglect.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse refers to the non-accidental injury to a child by a parent, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child.

Indicators of physical abuse in children:

- Bruises or welts
- Bite marks and scratches where the bruise may show a print of teeth
- Explanation offered by the child is inconsistent with the injury
- Dislocations, sprains or twisting
- Burns and scalds
- Wariness of adult contacts
- Inappropriate clothing, eg. long sleeves on a hot day
- Fear of parents
- Fear of going home
- Ready attachment to strangers

Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child. Adults or adolescents who perpetrate child sexual abuse exploit the dependence and immaturity of children. Coercion, which may be physical or psychological, is intrinsic to sexual abuse and differentiates it from consensual peer sexual activity.

Indicators of sexual abuse in children:

- Direct or indirect disclosure
- Describing sexual acts
- Overtly sexual themes in artwork, play or writing
- Persistent running away from home
- Anorexia or over-eating
- Going to bed fully clothed
- Regression in developmental achievements
- Child being in contact with a known offender
- Unexplained accumulation of money and gifts
- Bleeding from vagina, external genitalia or anus
- Injuries such as tears or bruising to the genitalia or anus
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Injuries to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen and thighs
- Sophisticated or unusual sexual behaviour or knowledge
- Persistent habit disorders, eg. Sucking, biting, rocking
- Self-destructive behaviours, eg. Suicide attempts, substance abuse, self-mutilation.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse encompasses a range of behaviours that harm a child, including exposing a child to domestic violence. It is behaviour by a parent or caregiver which can destroy a child's confidence, resulting in significant emotional deprivation or trauma. It involves impairment of a child's social, emotional, cognitive or intellectual development and/or disturbance of a child's behaviour.

Indicators of emotional abuse in children:

- Feelings of worthlessness about life and themselves
- Extremely low self-esteem
- Compliant, passive, withdrawn, tearful
- Inability to value others
- Serious difficulties with peer and/or other relations
- Extreme attention seeking behaviour

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is violence, abuse and intimidatory behaviour perpetrated by one person against another in a personal, intimate relationship. Domestic violence has a profound effect on children and constitutes a form of abuse. Children can be affected by being exposed to violence in the parental relationship, by becoming victims of violence, or a combination of the two.

Neglect

Neglect occurs when a child is harmed by the failure to provide the basic physical and emotional necessities of life.

Indicators of neglect in children:

- Poor standards in hygiene leading to social isolation
- Scavenging or stealing food
- Extended stays at school, public areas, other homes
- Being focussed on basic survival
- Extreme longing for adult affection
- A flat and superficial way of relating, lacking a sense of genuine interaction
- Anxiety about being dropped or abandoned
- Self comforting behaviours, eg. Rocking, sucking.

Financial

- Activities by an attorney in violation of their powers, duties and responsibilities under an Enduring Power of Attorney (EPA),
- Misappropriation of money, valuables or assets,
- Forging signatures on cheques,
- Denial of access to personal assets,
- Accessing a person's funds electronically and/or
- Forced or unauthorised changes to legal documents

APPENDIX D

REPORT OF SUSPECTED ABUSE

(must be completed within 24 hours of disclosure or suspicion)

Do not interrogate the person in order to obtain this information

Name of person: _____

Age: _____

Street: _____

Suburb: _____

State: _____ Postcode _____

Phone: _____

Name of report writer: _____

Street: _____

Suburb: _____

State: _____ Postcode _____

Phone (home): _____ Phone (work): _____

Name of church group: _____

Disclosure made (reason for reporting):

Date, time and place disclosure was made:

Have parents been informed (if appropriate)?

Yes No

Signed (report writer): _____

Signed (senior pastor/children's coordinator): _____

Date: _____
