Safe Church Training Workbook

Baptist Churches WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Copyright Information

Introduction: Safe Ministry Resources

Safe Church refers to God-honouring, life-giving and harm-free ministry.

First and foremost, *Safe Church* is about God's love for all people. It is in response to his love for us, we as his people, demonstrating his love and care for each other. This occurs as we act in safe ways towards each other, truly living out Jesus' new commandment to love one another and that by this, all people will know that we are his disciples (John 13:34-35).

Safe Church occurs as all those who represent the church, including those who minister with children and young people, fulfil their biblical (pastoral), legal, organisational and risk management responsibilities. This often feels like wearing many 'hats' at once. Additionally, these hats, when responding to complex child protection situations, can often feel in conflict e.g. pastoral -vs- risk management responses.

The focus of *Safe Church* is ensuring that all those who represent the church do all they can to promote the spiritual, physical and emotional well-being of people they serve, with special regard to age, ability, cultural heritage and circumstance.

It is essential that those who operate (govern) the church and those who attend church and ministry programs are involved and clear about their responsibilities for keeping themselves and others safe. Keeping people safe is everybody's business!

Practically, this includes the implementation of policies and procedures in the areas of due diligence and duty of care, as well as providing just and fair response processes for responding to grievances and/or allegations of ministry misconduct and/or abuse. As we establish and maintain *Safe Church* in our events and programs, we will fulfil our biblical, ethical, denominational, risk management, insurance, and legal responsibilities.

The aim, therefore, of this workbook is to reduce the instances of ministry misconduct, abuse, duty of care and/or safety failures, by providing local churches with good practice, policy and procedures for *Safe Church* ministry.

Acknowledgements

The *Safe Church Training Workbook* is a denominational adaptation of the *Safe Ministry Resources Safe Ministry Manual 2018* and includes recommendations from the *Baptist Churches Western Australia.*

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Addressing personal issues raised by Safe Ministry information and workshops

Safe Church information and workshops provides detailed information about child abuse and neglect. Every child is different, and the impact of child abuse or neglect on any one child will depend not only on the harmful experiences they had as a child, but also on the supports that were available to them at the time, and the experiences they have had since.

If the information and/or workshop has caused you distress or you can't stop thinking about issues it raised, you may find it helpful to talk to someone about your concerns. You may be able to access a confidential employee assistance program through your employment or you may prefer to contact one of the services listed on the inside cover of this workbook.

National Commitment to Safety

Australia has a high commitment to safety for all people, expressed in legislation and government policy relating to child and vulnerable people protection. In addition to the common law concept of duty of care, Australian has specific federal and state laws to protect people such as; child protection, working with children check, sexual harassment, sexual consent, work health and safety, and company regulations. This workbook includes important information about WA legislation and requirements.

Responding to the Royal Commission and beyond

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) concluded in 2017. Over 5 years, the Royal Commission conducted research, held public enquiries, listened in private session to the stories of over 8,000 victims of child sexual abuse in institutional settings, made 2,575 referrals to authorities (including police) and produced its final report in December 2017.

Volume 16 of the Final report addressed religious institutions and included both recommendations to specific faith groups and 28 recommendations to all faith groups.

By 30 June 2018 all Australian governments; state, territory and federal published their responses to the Royal Commission's recommendations. These responses have seen changes in laws in many jurisdictions. There has also been the introduction of a National Redress Scheme and establishment of a National Office for Child Safety.

The 10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (pictured below) have also been released at a National level. These were previously released as the Royal Commission's 10 Standards and are good practice for organisations who provide services to children. While these principles are not binding (laws) they do provide helpful benchmarks for best practice in child safety.

Principle 1: *"leadership, governance and culture,"* is the starting place for this commitment. There needs to be an ongoing organisational commitment to a culture of safety. This commitment goes beyond policy and procedures to include safe thinking and acting, safe interactions and involvement. It also involves resourcing with personnel and with necessary finances for implementation of policy and procedures. In a church context this commitment needs to extend to all people God has placed in our care, from children to the elderly, and in particular those in need of special care (the vulnerable).

Baptist Churches Western Australia

Safe Churches 2022

In 2009 BCWA began holding **_Safe Church_** workshops designed to develop the church leader's awareness of the legal, insurance, risk management and pastoral issues that arise as they minister to people of all ages. These workshops provide leaders with an opportunity to unpack and understand safe ministry concepts: duty of care, child protection, due diligence and risk management.

These resources take and build upon our previous BCWA "Responsible Care" policy and places it in the broader context of **_Safe Church_** ministry. **_Safe Church_** ministry is accountable and transparent ministry; ministry conducted by leaders who have been adequately screened, trained and are well supervised; ministry that has programs that are well organised and prepared for any incidents that may occur.

This manual contains valuable information for safety in ministry programs. It is designed for presentation in a workshop format where an opportunity to unpack the concepts is provided through various tasks or exercises. There are also a number of 'team reflection' tasks specifically designed for use in team meetings after the awareness workshop. We encourage team leaders to spend time after the workshop working through these tasks with their teams.

Procedural Recommendations

We recommended that pastors, all church policy decision makers, all ministry team leaders, and also team members (volunteers) of children and youth ministries (0-18years) attend a Safe Church awareness workshop within their first year of ministry.

A workshop in itself does not ensure safe churches, but rather, safe church policy and procedures must be established and maintained. Therefore, this Safe Church Training Workbook contains procedural recommendations and forms for implementation.

To help you in the implementation the following resources are available:

- _Safe Church Policy_
- _Code of Good Leadership Practices_
- _Risk Management and Safe Environment Guidelines_
- _Safe Church Implementation Guide_
- _Risk Management Guide for Churches: Baptist Insurance Services_
- _www.baptistwa.asn.au has a specific area for Safe Church._

Due to our belief in the autonomy of the local church we cannot demand that our churches implement the Safe Church policy documents. However, they are endorsed by the Council of the Baptist Churches Western Australia and in any legal proceedings you may be asked if any such recommendations existed and if so, whether or not they were followed. As such, we strongly urge you to implement these recommendations.

Reflection: Expectations
What do you hope to achieve by participating in this
Safe Church Awareness Workshop?

Chapter 1: Safe Church Overview

This chapter aims to develop awareness of the:
- biblical basis for Safe Church ministry
- foundational concepts of creating and maintaining safe ministry
- overarching principles of creating and maintaining safe ministry

Safe Church ministry refers to church events, programs, experiences and interactions conducted in a God-honouring, life giving and harm free manner. Safe Church is everybody's business, not just those who work for the church, but also the wider congregation, as well as our denominational leadership. We all have a vital role to play in providing life giving, harm free environments at church.

A crucial part of providing safe church is that, as church leaders, we do all that we can to ensure that all people, regardless of age and ability, are cared for spiritually, physically and emotionally, both pro-actively as well as responsively.

The aim of this chapter is to provide the biblical basis and foundational ideas and concepts of Safe Church ministry events and programs. It is hoped that a sound understanding of the foundations and principles will help leaders embrace the Safe Church policy (p. 59-60) and procedures as opportunities for loving others, rather than as a hindrance to 'real' ministry.

Exercise 1.1 - What makes a church safe for ministry?
Discuss what you think makes a church an emotionally, spiritually and physically safe place for all people.

a. Foundations

Foundations are the blocks upon which a house is built. Like the wise man who built his house on the rock in the parable of the wise and foolish men (Matthew 7:21-27), we commit to church ministries and programs built on solid Safe Church foundations.

This section outlines four foundational concepts upon which Safe Church policies and procedures have been built. i.e. God's Love for All People, the Gift of Boundaries Team Ministry and Duty of Care.

a.i.   God's Love for All People

God is love! (1 John 4:16). This is the starting place for Safe Church ministry. God's love is expressed in God's nature as the community God, i.e. the triune Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is into this love God invites us. He created us in His image as relational beings, created in love, for love. God's love is expressed in His revelation to us throughout His word and through His incarnation. "For God so loved the world", John 3:16 states, that God came into the world to save us. John 3:17 continues that Jesus came not to condemn the world, but rather to save the world.

Jesus is the hands on demonstration of God's love for all people, not only the religious, important or wise, but also for children, women, the lowly, the poor, the sick, sinners and tax collectors - the outcasts. In Jesus, everyone is loved!

The Greek word for love in many New Testament passages is *agape* - a love that is self-giving in its nature. This type of love is explained in Philippians chapters 2:1-11. In this passage we are called, in response to God's love, for us to put others first; consider others interests; to imitate Christ's example – who emptied himself of the glory of heaven for the sake of the world (vv5-8).

Our primary motive, the reason *why,* we establish and maintain safe church ministry is God's love for us.

Reflection: God's love revealed

Consider the ways you see God's love revealed in your ministries.

a.ii. The Gift of Boundaries

Boundaries define that I am distinct from you; that we are equal but separate beings.

God's word also provides us with God-given boundaries. In creation, God established such boundaries as day from night, sea from land, each animal in its kind. In the garden, God gave humans a relational boundary, i.e. to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3). When this boundary was violated by the first humans, this brought about broken relationships.

Relationship boundaries in the Bible provide the pattern for loving relationships: from the 10 commandments, and the covenant between Israel and God, through to Ephesians 5:15-21 which is about how we are to relate to each other i.e. submitting to one another out of reverence for God.

One way of defining boundaries is as socially determined markers between individuals or parties in spiritual, financial, physical, emotional, language, sexual and other areas.

"Boundaries are a gift. … they give shape to our relationships, all of our relationships" (M. Fortune, Boundaries 201, 2012, p.5).

However, we live in a "*culture which celebrates the absence of boundaries as individual freedom, [therefore] it is sometimes difficult to recall the value of boundaries in our lives and in particular, in our ministry or teaching. But without boundaries, we cannot really be in relationships. With boundaries, we develop trust in relationships and minimize the potential to cause harm"* (M. Fortune, Boundaries 201, 2012, p.5).

Boundaries in Ministry

In a ministry setting, "*boundaries protect space that must exist between the professional and the client by controlling the power differential in the relationship*" (Peterson, At Personal Risk, 1992, p. 46).

Ministry is about serving people; therefore ministry life is filled with dual relationships. I.e. where those who are entrusted with the power and authority to serve will also be engaged in personal friendships with those they serve.

As part of exercising our ministry gifts we confront and even cross boundaries regularly. When we speak to a person, we cross a boundary. When we shake someone's hand, we cross a boundary. When we challenge a theological perspective held by another person, we are crossing their boundary. These can all be part of normal and acceptable boundary crossing within a ministry context. (FaithTrust Institute, Boundaries 101, 2012, p. 7)

However, when crossing a boundary in ministry we do need to consider what is right for the person under our care. Is it the right time, the right place, the right circumstance, and right for them? In crossing a boundary our focus is about what is good for the other person and that they have the ability to retain or reclaim the boundary.

Remember, "*boundaries are NOT … clear rules about where and when we can be friendly … [nor are they] blocks to authenticity and friendliness. [We need to be] aware of our needs and find healthful ways of having them met other than by the people we are supposed to be serving.*" (FaithTrust Institute, Boundaries 101, 2012, p. 7).

Some boundaries are **flexible**: How we interact within the boundaries may be different depending on the time, place, circumstance and the people we are serving.

Some boundaries are **inflexible** (strong): They are designed to show us clearly where we must not go. These boundaries are not to be crossed at any time.

Due to the power imbalance inherent in a leader-follower relationship and any dual relationships which may be present as a result of roles, strong boundaries should not be crossed.

Four important questions we can ask ourselves before crossing a boundary are:
- Is this the right time to cross this boundary?
- Is this the right place (physically) to cross this boundary?
- Is this the right circumstance for this boundary crossing?
- Is this boundary crossing right for this person?

In this way we will ensure that we place the interests of those we serve above our own.

The existence of dual relationships and expectations that those representing the church will cross boundaries appropriately make clearly defined behavioural standards (boundaries) important for those who serve and lead in Christian ministry. These standards are often expressed in a code of conduct, code of ethics or in the BCWA Code of Good Leadership Practice. (p. 61-62)

Establishing and maintaining healthy personal boundaries along with boundary violating and appropriately crossing boundaries will be explored further in Chapters 2, 3 & 4 of this manual.

This includes ensuring that we only cross the boundaries of children and other vulnerable people in appropriate, life-giving and empowering ways.

Exercise 1.2 - Boundaries
What are some examples of flexible and inflexible boundaries in the roles volunteers and paid workers fulfil in your church?

a.iii. Team Ministry

In selecting and appointing a helper or leader (church worker) to carry out a task or ministry role, the church is asking the person to 'Represent us as an organisation - the church.' The church is saying: 'We trust this person to not make the good news of Jesus into bad news by harming others.'

It is important that all church workers understand that their role is more than just a task, "just helpers", but rather that all church workers are representatives of the church. Rather than a job to be done, ministry is a privilege, a responsibility, a position of delegated authority to influence others for God.

In this light, 'ministry as representing us' ministry is an expression of the body of Christ.

We see this type of ministry discussed in Paul's epistles which are filled with words about ministry being the work of the Holy Spirit, who gifts the members of the body of Christ so that they can minister to each other (Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 12). 'Body' or 'our' or 'team' ministry, rather than 'solo' or 'my' ministry is Paul's vision of the church.

Team ministry is the second HOW TO of Safe Church ministry.

As we minister in 'teams' we can also best protect each other from harmful or potentially harmful situations. Teams at their best share in ministry together. Healthy, loving, respectful teams nurture each other, entering into relationships with each other and receiving ministry from one another.

Given the spiritual nature of 'body' or 'team' ministry, a person's motive for wanting to be in leadership is crucial. Impure motives, or the lack of good motivation for a role, can lead to all kinds of problems for both the program and the team running the program. Healthy teams are the goal!

When ministry is born out of God's love for all people, carried out as we, the body of Christ, work together as teams in respectful ways, navigating flexible and inflexible boundaries, ministry will be life-giving. It will not intentionally do harm.

Reflection: Motivation for Sharing in Ministry
Take the time to ask yourself: "Why do I do what I do at church?"
What is my motivation for serving?

a.iv.   Duty of Care

Duty of care is a term we are more used to hearing in relation to work place safety, and is less thought of in the church context. However, duty of care finds its origins in Jesus' directive to "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31) and is therefore foundational for our provision of Safe Church ministry events and programs.

A general description of duty of care is to:

do everything reasonably practicable to protect others from harm.

This applies equally to buildings, kitchens, parking lots and the way we treat people. Our duty of care does not end when "our program" is over. Rather it applies to all people who enter church property at all times of the day, whether we are running a program or not. This also relates to acts of negligence, lack of care or attention, or acts of inattention or omission. The church leadership needs to be able to demonstrate that they have done all that they could reasonably have done to protect others from harm. In other words, simply having policy and procedures is not enough. The question that needs to be answered is: "In that particular situation did the church follow its policy and procedures?" I.e. did it do all it could to ensure that harm and/or distress did not occur?"

The community and congregation have expectations that those in leadership will be diligent in discharging their duty of care. These may include ensuring that:
- workers (volunteer & paid) have been recruited, screened, appointed, inducted, and are supervised.
- a safe spiritual, emotional and physical environment is provided for all people.
- complaints or allegations of abuse or misconduct are addressed according to good practice.
- people will receive pastoral support and care from the church.

To ensure that we act with a duty of care, and in so doing meet community expectations, we need to ensure that all church-authorised programs are well planned, having had all foreseeable risks identified, reduced or negated. This means that we think through what is safe, then put plans in place to ensure that we act safely, including implementing policies and procedures in order to protect people in our care from potential abuse or injury, and leaders from potential allegations of abuse or injury.

Duty of Care then, is the third HOW TO of Safe Church ministry.

Exercise 1.3 – Duty of Care
What are the duty of care concerns in the scenario provided?

b. Overarching Principles

Where foundations are the blocks upon which we build Safe Church ministry, overarching principles provide the "umbrella" under which we develop and implement policy and exercise ministry practice across all of the foundations.

Jesus Christ said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and love your neighbour as yourself." This Scripture guides us into appropriate relationships and provides the basis for the establishment and exercising of safe programs and practices, run in safe environments by safe leaders in a safe and abuse-free Christian community.

As we strive to implement these policies, we need to consider practice implications around transparency, accountability, and in legal and insurance implications.

b.i.   Exercise Transparency

Transparency in ministry relates to the practice of being willing and able to show others how you are caring for people. Being transparent means not only doing the right things, but also being seen to do the right thing. For example: Historically, the church in Australia has been seen by many as the moral police. However, when some church leaders failed morally, these failings were rarely spoken about and sometimes swept under the carpet. As places which offer ministry to vulnerable people, it is essential that churches are transparent in their motives and actions. We need transparency both in our relationships and in our policy and procedures.

b.ii.   Ensure Accountability

Accountability relates to an acceptance of being answerable to those in authority and being held responsible for words and actions (or lack of) directed toward both those sharing in ministry, and those receiving ministry (Marshall, T, 1991). Within a Christian framework, the notion of being answerable to those in authority implies a willingness to be called to account. This implies that no one in ministry is allowed to function in ministry without responsibility for how their words or actions will impact another person, or to what degree they are consistent with the aims and objectives of the ministry and the church.

Accountability is vital within a ministry framework. In ministry we need to focus on the idea of being about "our" ministry rather than "my" ministry. When a person is part of a ministry team, it is expected that they will be supported and encouraged by others in their ministry team.

Good practice suggests that for accountability purposes, leaders are given clear expectations in relation to their role, and a code of conduct. They should be appropriately screened for, and inducted into, the role. A Code of Good Leadership Practice is a valuable tool for facilitating accountability. It will be explored further in Chapter 3, Safe Leaders.

An important accountability and transparency tool is a Safe Church Policy which encompasses protection of children and other vulnerable people. (p. 59-60)

Reflection: Accountability and Transparency
How are you currently using policy and procedures to ensure transparency and accountability in your church?

b.iii. Meet Legal Requirements

Legislation surrounding Work Health and Safety, Mandatory Reporting, child and elder abuse, concealment and Working with Children Checks, as well as the legal concepts of due diligence and duty of care all make it important to have quality policy and procedures for Safe Church ministry. Denominations often provide these for congregations. It is important that we make leaders and congregations aware of these and how they are to follow them.

Legally organisations and church congregations need to ensure that they:
- discharge their duty of care;
- practise due diligence in relation to their workers (both paid and volunteer);
- are free from violence and exploitation;
- foster people's health, developmental and spiritual needs (e.g. self-respect and dignity); and
- have a process for responding to grievances, allegations of abuse and misconduct (including child protection and sexual harassment).

Fulfilling legal obligations in relation to safe leaders (due diligence) includes: policies, procedures, recruitment processes, supervision of leaders, codes of conduct and information about services provided.

To assist churches fulfil legal requirements, BCWA has published a Safe Church Policy.
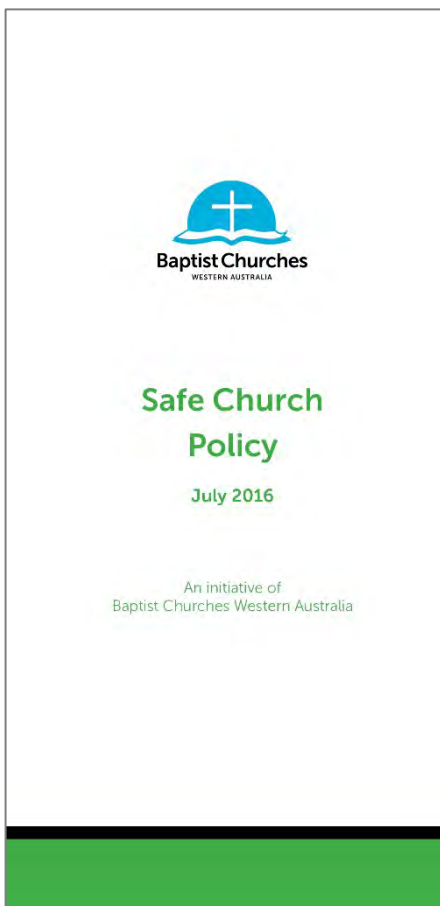
The sample Safe Church policy (p. 60-61) has been written and formatted so as to enable distribution to the maximum number of people. The policy contains 6 commitments to church safety. This can be printed or emailed to all congregation members and handed out to participants at programs, where appropriate, as a declaration that you are taking being safe seriously.

Other legal considerations include but are not limited to: building codes; safety legislation such as adhering to Australian and NZ Standards; ACNC governance standards (does not apply to basic religious charities) compliance with copyright and music playing licences such as APRA, CCLI, CAL licences; and compliance with local government food preparation and storage guidelines.

An adequate understanding of the legalities governing GST, Exempt Benefits, workers compensation, superannuation and the responsibilities of charities is essential. If your church does not have the expertise to properly comply with all government regulations, you will need to employ or contract a suitably qualified person to do so on your behalf.

Reflection: Legal Requirements
What legal requirements might your ministry be subject to?

b.iv. Insurance Implications

As the church we are first and foremost a community of faith, a group of gathered believers, not a club or agency. However, as faith communities who meet in and often own buildings, and employ workers (paid and volunteer), we are also organisations (legal entities). Some churches may be unincorporated associations, whilst others will be incorporated.

The management of risks for local churches as organisations is the responsibility of the governing body of the church. They need to ensure they are diligent in the management of ministry programs, activities and events. All churches, for the protection of both people and property, should hold a range of insurances, from building to public liability and office holders' insurance. The insurance cover will be dependent upon conditions in the policy. It is the responsibility of the local church to ensure that they have acted in ways that have been diligent.

BCWA do offer individual churches insurance through Baptist Insurance Services (BIS), however it is the responsibility of each local congregation to ensure that they have adequate insurance cover. It is wise to contact your insurer at the earliest opportunity should you believe that a claim may be made.

We recommend that you contact your insurer immediately if you:
- Receive a verbal complaint which cannot be easily solved and without expense
- Receive a letter threatening legal action from an individual
- Receive a solicitor's letter threatening legal action
- Receive a writ/summons/subpoena/legal court document
- Have a contentious employee termination.

We also recommend the *Risk Management Guide for Churches* issued by BIS as a helpful resource in understanding risk when caring for people, property and pastoral activities.

Commitment 1
Adequate Training of Leaders

BCWA recommend that you make the following commitment:

- We require that all pastors, ministry coordinators and team leaders of all ministries and also all team members of teams providing programs for 0-18 year olds attend a Safe Church Workshop as part of their induction training (or SCTA endorsed) workshop and attend a refresher workshop every 3 years.

- We require all leaders to attend ministry-specific training as required by church leadership.

Chapter 2: Protecting Vulnerable People

This chapter aims to develop awareness of:
- proactive protection
- harmful behaviours and abuse
- responding to concerns of abuse (legal and denominational procedures)

Protecting people from being harmed is the focus of this chapter, particularly, but not limited to, harm in a church context. In particular, this chapter is aimed at helping church leaders and workers understand, recognise and respond to concerns in relation to all people who may be at risk of being harmed.

These concerns may be for a person/s at risk of harm, or concerns about a person's harmful behaviours towards others. It is important for church leaders and workers to recognise that those who are vulnerable (including children), those with special needs and any other permanent or temporary need of special care, can be more susceptible to being harmed and/or abused by others.

This chapter provides definitional information, language and procedures for responding to concerns about people. It is designed to be a 'tool box' for understanding and responding to concerns about harmful behaviours.

Safe Church provides both the 'fence' at the top of the cliff to prevent harm and the 'ambulance' at the bottom to respond quickly and adequately to any harm that does occur. It is both proactive and responsive.

a. Being Proactive

A proactive approach to protecting people must be our starting place for life-giving, harm-free ministry to the glory of God. A proactive approach includes the implementation of Safe Church policy and procedures. This commitment to being proactive in protecting children is evidenced in the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

Being proactive starts with church leadership being active in its ongoing commitment to safety. Principle 1 of the Principles for Child Safe Organisations states: '*Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture*'. This takes time and resources (human and financial), and without this ongoing commitment, implementation of policy and procedure may not be successful. This can lead to gaps in the proactive 'fence'.

a.i Empowering People to Protect Themselves

By actively encouraging program and event participants to develop in their self-awareness and self-protection, we are protecting everyone. This is empowering, life-giving ministry. Empowering people to protect themselves is about being proactive and helping to prevent harm before it occurs.

The second National Principle for Child Safe Organisations relates to "empowerment & participation of children". We can encourage parents to access resources that help to empower children with protective strategies. Here are some sample resources that you may find helpful:

- **Safe Series** (ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/training-and-resources)
- **The Safeguarding Program** (http://safeguarding.perthcatholic.org.au)

AS CHRISTIAN LEADERS WE CAN:

Encourage people to trust their feelings & to speak up when they feel unsafe or at risk

We can learn to have a keen natural sense of when something is amiss. We can learn to recognise our feelings: good, bad or confused. However, past abuse can damage a person's ability to recognise and indeed trust their own feelings. Providing guidance in our language as to what is 'normal' in terms of

feelings can be helpful, especially for children and with adults who may have experienced past abuse. This will include communicating with children and parents in relation to your response to complaint processes.

It is important people know who they can approach when they feel unsafe or at risk of harm. As a church, consider the strategies for communicating who people can speak to at such times. As leaders you can create a safer culture through encouraging people to speak up when they feel something is happening to them or others. Consider the internal and external people and supports that may be drawn upon to prevent or address potentially harmful situations.

This also includes empowering people to say 'no'. Religion may be used to make people feel as though they need to comply with a leader's directive, e.g. "God loves it when you serve the church in this way." Children are taught to be polite and obey adults. People, including children, must have permission and capacity (including language) to say no to an adult if they need to protect themselves, even if that person makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened. Ways to empower children to say "no" are to teach them about safe and unsafe touch and how to respond when touch feels unsafe, and to teach them that their body belongs to them, and how to respond if someone tries to touch their private parts. The resources mentioned earlier can help in this training.

Church also needs to be a place where people can be trusted with confidential information. However, it should never be a place where vulnerable adults are pressured to keep secrets to protect a leader's reputation. A transparent process for reporting concerns, which is clearly communicated to the whole congregation, can achieve this. With children, we need to avoid creating a culture of secret-keeping.

Foster opportunities for stakeholders to have a voice in the organisation (feedback and input)

People are more susceptible to harm when they feel as though they have no say in decisions made about them. All people need to be free to express their opinions and ideas in an environment where these will be valued and, where appropriate, implemented. This is reflected in the Royal Commission's 2nd Child Safe Standard: Participation and empowerment. This will include allowing input on the policy and procedures and seeking age-appropriate feedback from both children and their parents (care-givers).

Identify safe people and support networks

A support network provides trusted people to connect with when feeling threatened or fearful for any reason. In the case of children and young people, a support network may also include friends who may play a vital role in supporting a child or young person to feel safe and less isolated.

Provide safe touch

Some leaders have developed such anxiety about being wrongfully accused of inappropriately touching of a child or a member of the congregation, that they won't ever touch a distressed person.

There are some useful principles to apply when considering the area of touch between a church leader and someone under their pastoral care.

1. In general, respond to touch initiated by someone under your care, rather than initiating it.
2. When touching a person who is distressed, touch only as long as to satisfy the immediate need.
3. Seek permission before initiating a touch with someone under your care, such as asking: "would you like a hug?" and respecting their decision if they say no.
4. Be aware of different types of touches and focus on good touches.
   a. Good touches: where a person feels safe, comfortable and respected. These would include:
      i. touches that focus on neutral body zones, such as brief side hugs
      ii. touches that involve the hands, such as high-fives or shaking hands
   b. Bad touches: where a person feels intimidated, degraded or is harmed, such as causing pain or touching in intimate areas or in an intimate manner.

    c. Confusing touches: where a person feels wary or uncertain about the intention or meaning of the touch, such as staring, prolonged or tight hugs or tickling.

5. Manage the touch environment in order to protect yourself and the person under your care.
    a. If you are aware or suspect that someone under your care is likely to initiate a touch that may become prolonged or intense, circumvent the situation by encouraging the person to sit down and then arrange yourself at an angle to avoid close body contact between the two of you.
    b. If a person is becoming distressed and the interaction prolonged, request another leader to join you.
    c. Ensure an environment likely to involve touch takes place in a public setting where you are in view of others at all times.

6. Be aware that young children are likely to initiate touch and have strategies for satisfying their immediate need (using Good Touches) and then affirm them by keeping them close to you after the touch.

7. Be respectful of people's personal space needs.

Set clear boundaries together

Respectful relationships are fostered through being mindful of personal behaviours and their impact on others. These can be helped by setting clearly-defined appropriate boundaries for each ministry. Take the time to work with program participants on a clear set of behavioural boundaries for each ministry program.

Adult-based programs: Agreed-upon guidelines (boundaries) should be used for decision-making e.g. be willing to listen to the opinions of others; respect personal boundaries of others (physical, emotional and spiritual). Clearly communicate these boundaries!

Child-based programs: Agreed-upon appropriate behaviours. This is an area in which children can be given a voice, in helping decide on the 'rules'.

a.ii. Participation of Care Givers and the Community

The 3rd National Principle of Child Safe Organisations is: Families and communities are informed and involved.

As an example of how this can be actioned, a Safe Ministry Policy might state:

- in relation to children, we acknowledge the primary role of parents and care-givers as well as the role of children in child protection and will actively engage with children and care-givers, inviting open communication and feedback as part of our procedures and interactions.

- in relation to children, we acknowledge the shared responsibility of the whole community for child safety and welfare, including caregivers and our workers, and as such we will actively promote the role of parents and care givers and the wider community in the shared responsibility of child safety.

A safe church is a place that invites the participation of those who are key stakeholders in children's lives, e.g. parents and the broader community who interact with the church.

A helpful resource in relation to protecting children through participation can be found at the Australian Institute for Family Studies (https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/protection-through-participation)

An example of what this may look like in practice is found in the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian's Guide to the Child Safe Standards.

> *Principle 3: Families and communities are informed and involved.*
>
> *Ways that we know we're meeting the Standard:*
>
> - *Leaders and staff encourage families to take an active role in keeping children safe*
>
> - *Policies and procedures (including Codes of Conduct) are clearly communicated to parents and carers*
>
> - *Families and community members are encouraged to give feedback on how the organisation keeps children safe, and this information is acted upon where necessary*
>
> - *Families feel welcome*
>
> - *Families and the community support the organisation to be safer for children*
>
> - *Families and the community are comfortable asking questions on how the organisation prioritises child safety.*

(Source: Guide to the Child Safety Standards / [https://www.ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/training-and-resources/child-safe-standards /](https://www.ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/training-and-resources/child-safe-standards) December 2021)

a.iii. Respecting Diversity and Inclusion

The 4th National Principle of Child Safe Organisations is: Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account:

> a. The institution actively anticipates children's diverse circumstances and responds effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities.
>
> b. All children have access to information, support and complaints processes.
>
> c. The institution pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Chapter 4 in this workbook, "Safe Emotional and Spiritual Environments", includes reflections on respecting diversity and inclusion.

The Royal Commission: Final Report Volume 6 states:

Increased risk is related to the intersection of the institutional environment, the presence of a perpetrator and the child's personal circumstances, including societal attitudes. Taking these factors into account, we heard that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can more often face a range of vulnerabilities. All child safe institutions need to be especially alert to children's diverse circumstances and how they may be excluded from protections or face additional risks.

An institution should inform itself about known issues, for example:

> • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children – understanding the historical context of colonisation, the impacts of collective trauma and contemporary effects; being aware of the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family structures; being responsive to cultural needs; and promoting anti-racist attitudes.

• Children with disability – making additional efforts to ensure inclusion and avoid segregation; challenging stereotypes and discrimination; and understanding the effect of a child's particular impairment.

• Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds – ensuring language and cultural interpretation; considering potential trauma backgrounds related to migration experience; and taking different family structures and norms into account. These issues are indicative only and each institution is responsible for considering and responding to the possibility of situational and vulnerability risks in their context.

(Source: The Royal Commission: Final report Volume 6: Page 264)

Reflection: Respectful Relationships
What are some of the ways you have encouraged respectful behaviours from those in your ministry program?

b. Vulnerable People

A vulnerable person is someone who is in need of special care because of temporary or permanent losses or other causes of vulnerability, such as age.

When someone is vulnerable, they are more susceptible to being harmed (abused) by others. We also need to recognise that there will be times when we are more vulnerable and may be in need of more care from others.

In the Old Testament God commanded Israel to take special care for classes of vulnerable people: the widow, the poor, the orphan and the alien (foreigners living in Israel) (e.g. Deut 10:18-19). In Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says to his friends: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (6:20). Not the poor in spirit, as in Matthew, but the poor. God is for those who 'do not have' in earthly terms, He says his kingdom is theirs. James 1:27 reinforces this by reminding us that the "religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

Exercise 2.1 – Causes of Vulnerability
Who are the vulnerable today?

What leads to people being in need of special care (vulnerable)?

c. Understanding Harmful Behaviours and Abuse

c.i.   Factors Influencing Our Understanding

When it comes to understanding what is and is not abuse, it is helpful to first acknowledge that we are influenced by a number of factors.

Exercise 2.2 – Is this abuse?
Read each of the scenarios. *(don't call out)*
Consider: "Is this an abuse situation or not?"

Factors such as the amount of information we have (in general and a specific scenario), social discourse on the topic in our society, our proximity to the issue, moral disengagement, and myths, can all influence whether or not we see a particular situation or behaviour as harmful towards others or not.

We are also impacted by our perception of that situation, including: our upbringing, parents' behaviour, experiences we have had at the hands of influential people around us, our values, our attitudes concerning what constitutes harmful &/or abusive behaviour, our views on people's rights, and our perceived responsibilities toward vulnerable people.

Whilst there are some areas that clearly constitute harmful behaviours, there are some grey areas that will vary depending upon the factors that inform our view. We need to recognise that we are all coloured in our view, and need to be guided by information and report our concerns to our supervisor and, where appropriate, to the authorities.

c.ii.   Power in Relationships

In all relationships there is a power balance between the parties. Relationships are either equal in power, i.e. relationships in which two or more parties have the same amount of power, or alternatively, they are unequal or there is a power imbalance, as is the case between adults and children. In some relationships it is appropriate that the more powerful takes steps to redress the balance of power. In other relationships the more powerful person needs to consider how their actions will empower the less powerful person, whilst retaining the power imbalance.

The balance of power can be impacted by a number of factors such as: size, experience, knowledge and position (role).

Power is:
- Relational - we have power/resources in relation to someone else. I may have more power than my grandnephew and less power than my Board President.
- Contextual - power and/or resources depend on context. I may have power/authority vis a vis the congregant listening to my sermon or student hearing my lecture, who becomes my PA.
- About Resources - what we have or don't have materially, psychologically, and socially.
- Neutral - power is neither good nor bad. Like fire, it can cook a meal or burn down a house. (Editor's note: God's power is more than neutral i.e. God is power (all-powerful) and gives us power through the Holy Spirit "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;" (Acts 1:8). Paul encourages Timothy that God has given us a Spirit of "power not timidity" in 2 Timothy 1:7. God's power is good, it creates, it heals, brings salvation and is self-giving, empowering others).

Vulnerability is:
- The absence of resources.
- Relational - we are vulnerable in relation to a particular person. I am vulnerable to my therapist in ways I am not as director of my agency.
- Contextual - vulnerability depends on a context in which we have fewer resources. The Board of Trustees/Dean of Faculty can take steps to have me fired. (Fortune, Responding to Misconduct, 2009, p. 45)

Understanding ministry as both privilege and responsibility is important. We have the resources to lead and care for others and these resources also come with an obligation.

A useful metaphor for this is the 'international rules of the sea'. The rules of the sea are literally the international standards for navigation on any body of water. The purpose of the rules is to clarify that the vessel with greater resources has a responsibility to a vessel with fewer resources in terms of the power to manoeuvre.

SPEED BOAT is the "burdened" (obligated) party
- Has power and control of movement
- Is obligated to avoid boats under sail
- Has the "burden" (obligation) of responsibility.

SAILBOAT is the "privileged" party
- At the mercy of the wind; less control of movement
- Is vulnerable to power boats
- Has the "privilege" of being protected.

The language used in the Rules is very interesting in this context. The vessel with greater power is the "burdened" party; the vessel with lesser power is the "privileged" party. These classifications by definition create a moral responsibility based on power and vulnerability. Although this runs counter to our standard social analysis which associates privilege with having power and resources and burden (of poverty, for example) with the absence of power and resources, it is language more fitting for our moral awareness as people of faith (FaithTrust Institute, Boundaries 2012, 2013, p. 32).

Positional Power
In relationships where a person's position gives them power over another in order that the less powerful person might be protected or educated (e.g. teachers and pupils), it is inappropriate to change the balance of power. Within hierarchical organisational structures, or where someone is charged, for example, with upholding the law of the land, or where a person's health is being attended to, there exists an appropriate power imbalance.

In a church context, positions of leadership also hold varying levels of power to influence others for God. In the eyes of those under their authority, leaders may be seen as representing God's authority and, in some cases, God's will for their lives. Therefore, those in positions of power must have a sound understanding of, and uphold, appropriate relationship boundaries so as to protect the less powerful person.

Unfortunately, some abuses of positional power have been treated as 'sin issues' and/or moral failures. In many of these cases, the leader was suspended for a short period and then given another position of leadership without addressing the abuse of power that occurred.

c.iii. Boundary Violations

In Chapter 1 we explored the gift of boundaries and the importance of appropriate boundary crossings. There are a range of responses to personal boundaries. Some boundaries are flexible, and can be crossed appropriately - determined by place, relationships, roles, and circumstances - whilst others should never be crossed - inflexible boundaries.

When boundaries are not crossed appropriately it may negatively impact the person on the receiving end of the action or inaction. These are known as boundary violations and can cause harm to others. All boundary violations are examples of people putting their own needs above others.

Boundary violations can occur across a variety of boundaries be they spiritual, financial, physical, emotional, language, and/or sexual.

It is important to acknowledge that not all boundary violations are carried out with malicious intent, which is to say, boundary violations can be thought of as being on a continuum from unintentional 'wandering' across boundaries, to intentional actions of harm and /or carefully-planned, predatory-style boundary violations.

The following descriptions are not an attempt to define types of offenders, but rather to provide a description of the continuum from respecting boundaries, through to intentionally-violating, and/or predatory-type violations. Using this language can be helpful when addressing concerns with those who may be exhibiting boundary violations.

Non-offender (Boundary Respecter)
Discovers that a boundary is approaching, or that they have overstepped a boundary, and makes a deliberate correction to cross the boundary appropriately.

BOUNDARY

Wanderer (Boundary Rider)
Approaches boundary and engages in inappropriate behaviour without boundary awareness (e.g. gossip). Wandering behaviour is not intended to harm, but because it is not considering how the other person is experiencing the interaction, it has the potential to do great harm.
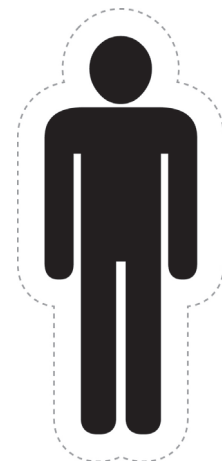
Intentional Violations (Boundary Violator)
The offender understands that the boundary should not be crossed, but does so intentionally to harm the other person.

Predator (Boundary Violator)
The predator heads directly for the boundary and aims to break down a person's boundaries.

Clearly-defined ministry boundaries are helpful to the wanderer as they clearly define behavioural expectations. They are also helpful because they say to the intentional violator and/or predator, "You will not be able to act that way as a leader of our program." Churches need to ensure that all those given positions of power/authority know how to appropriately navigate boundaries by setting well communicated ministry boundaries via a code of conduct (see chapter 3). BCWA have published a 'Code of Good Leadership Practice' to assist churches. (p. 61-62)

Another important question to ask when considering crossing a boundary is: "Would I be comfortable if all my acquaintances knew I was doing this?" (FaithTrust Institute, Boundaries 101, 2012, p. 7). It is our responsibility as church workers to "establish a system of accountability. That is, we should arrange to meet regularly with a spiritual director, teacher, or colleague with whom we can speak honestly [or meet regularly with and be accountable to our team]" (ibid, p. 7).

c.iv. Abuse Defined

"Abuse is the violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. It can vary from the seemingly trivial act of not treating someone with dignity and respect - to extreme punishment, cruelty or torture" (Adult Protection Committee: Yorkshire).

Abuse, in terms of boundaries, can be defined as a *serious violation* leading to harm. It is a disrespecting of personhood which 'steals' or 'robs' from the other person their self-respect, esteem and confidence, and can lead to the victim experiencing short and long term effects.

In this sense abuse can be defined as the 'robbing' of personhood, a violation of a person's boundaries (that which defines 'them' as separate from the offender), often resulting in a sense of 'powerlessness' or 'voicelessness', eroding a person's self-worth, self-esteem and self-respect, and hindering the person's ability to act in healthy, life-giving ways, both towards their own self and others.

Abuse can take many forms, actions of commission like physical, emotional, sexual abuse, or actions of omission like neglect. The types of child abuse and neglect and are explored further on pages 21-26.

Given the broad scope of behaviours that are classified as misconduct and abuse it is important to remember that not all misconduct will be illegal. Government websites are also a useful source of information about the crimes acts and abuse related legislation in each state and territory.

A biblical example of abuse as the robbing of person is found in in 2 Samuel 11 & 12, the recount of David, Bathsheba and Uriah. In this story David sexually abuses Bathsheba, and then to cover this up, has Uriah murdered. Then David takes Bathsheba as one of his wives and she gave birth to a son. 2 Sam 11:27 says, "But the LORD was displeased with what David had done."

In Chapter 12 the Lord sends the Prophet Nathan to confront David. Nathan uses a story of a shepherd and sheep. However, interestingly Nathan's charge against David has nothing to do with the covenant violation of coveting, adultery, rape or murder - but rather stealing.

Dr Marie Fortune comments:

"It is not the Seventh Commandment, "You shall not commit adultery," that should concern us. The problem with sexual violence is not that it represents sex outside of marriage. Rather, it is the Eighth Commandment, "You shall not steal" (Deuteronomy 5:19 and Exodus 20:15).

"It is the theft by the assailant of the security and well-being of the victim, the betrayal of trust, and the theft of her/his future. Let's be clear. It is not property theft, i.e. the taking of the property belonging to the male head of household. It is the theft of the sense of self of the person who is abused. Her/his boundaries are violated, trust is betrayed, and relationships are often broken by the theft of the abuser." (Fortune, 2009, p. 13)

Anyone working with vulnerable people regularly may come face-to-face with what may be cases of abuse or situations where they form reasonable concerns about a person or group of people that may be at risk of being harmed. However, when our limited knowledge of a situation is combined with the factors that influence our perception, it can be difficult to be objective in our judgment.

To assist our decision-making we need to look at the guidelines that have been provided by State government legislation and our denomination for responding appropriately when we have concerns that someone is being, has been, or might be at risk of being harmed. Also remember it is your concerns about others that need to be responded to. You don't have to be the expert, but you do need to tell the appropriate person about your concerns.

d. Responding to Concerns About Adults

It has become evident to society that children are not the only vulnerable group of people in need of protection. This can be seen in the use of such language as *elder abuse* in relating to mistreatment of the aged.

One definition of vulnerable adults is: "*people in addition to children, may be considered to be susceptible to abuse or exploitation based on factors such as their health status (mental or physical), age, grief, social isolation or financial hardship.*" (Seventh Day Adventist Australian Union Conference: Creating a Safe Place Policy 2011).

In the church context, there are those in congregations who will be in need of special care, either at times of particular vulnerability, or permanently given their level and/or state of vulnerability. Both those who lead or minister and those who are program participants/attendees may be vulnerable given a particular set of circumstances. This can include a person's inability to protect themselves, or their risk of self-harm.

The need to protect congregation members has come to light through the increased number of reports to denominational professional standards units of pastoral misconduct against congregation members. These abuses of 'positional power' have harmed people under their leadership. These might be also called personal boundary violations and can cause lasting emotional and spiritual damage. It is important also to note that members of the clergy and their families have also experienced boundary violations against them from their congregations.

Responding to concerns of abuse and other health issues in vulnerable adults is a complex issue. Sometimes it will be very clear what to do as in allegations of criminal activity toward an adult: e.g. sexual harassment or rape. Other times this means utilising the local health services and working with the person and their family to provide comfort, support and access to resources and services.

Additionally, adults are self-determining, i.e. have the right to make decisions about their own lives, so long as the actions are not endangering themselves or others. This means we will need to work with the adult at risk rather than the principle of 'acting in the best interest of the child' when considering a response in the area of child protection.

All allegations of ministry misconduct or abuse by a leader against vulnerable adults need to be reported to the Safe Church Response Officer. For churches who are members of Baptist Union of Western Australia, allegations of ministry misconduct of senior leaders should be reported through the Baptist Churches of Western Australia.

For concerns about the conduct of people with special needs, (e.g. intellectual or physical disability or mental health concern) speak to a pastor who may seek advice from relevant health services.

The following areas are of particular concern, and when arise, should be responded to appropriately:

d.i.   Bullying Behaviours

A person in a church may state that they have been bullied. They may have experienced some uncomfortable things in church life. However, not all unpleasant experiences within a church fall into the realm of bullying behaviours. It is important to determine if what a person is experiencing is actually bullying or not. Factors such as conflict in a situation, personality styles, or differing expectations might be at play. In these situations it may or may not be that the person has experienced bullying behaviours.

Bullying in the church can come from any person, but it is most often a situation involving a power imbalance where the person exercising bullying behaviours has more power than the target of the bullying behaviour. Bullying does not have to be individual behaviour. A group in the church can also be responsible for bullying and the target may be an individual or group – in some cases this sort of bullying is referred to as 'mobbing'.

What is NOT considered to be bullying:
There are things that happen in churches that are not considered to be bullying, even when these experiences may be slightly uncomfortable for those on the receiving end of the behaviours. The following are not considered to be bullying:

- Reasonable supervisor/team leader/pastoral action. This can include:
    - counselling you because of concerns about your behaviour
    - allocating reasonable tasks to you in keeping with your team or ministry area
    - requesting you to do things that are requested of everyone in a team or attending an event
    - changing your roster in a reasonable way, even if you don't like it
    - giving you critical feedback about your actions when this is done in privacy and in a respectful manner
    - asking you to move into a different ministry when this is in keeping with your skills and you are consulted first
    - being left out of meetings when they are not relevant to your role or ministry.

- Good natured interactions with peers, such as:
    - joking, laughing and telling stories when it is not directed at anyone and does not contain offensive content
    - being respectfully told by another church member that you are bothering them or hampering their service
    - occasionally being left out of social gatherings, such as a group of church members going out for dinner together
    - someone disagreeing with your opinion in a respectful way
    - accidentally being overlooked in a social invitation (so long as this is not a consistent and repeated occurrence).

What is bullying?
Bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour that has the potential to cause harm to the health and safety of a church member. Bullying can take many forms but generally falls under one or more of the following:

Physical
The physical aspects of bullying also cover violent and sexual behaviours. This form of bullying is not as common as other forms of bullying but can nonetheless have serious health and safety effects. It includes: hitting, punching, kicking, pinching, hair pulling, tugging at arms, shoulders, touching the body in a sexually suggestive manner, rape or sexual molestation, physical assault.

Verbal
The verbal aspects of bullying may not physically injure a church member but can cause serious damage to their psychological well-being, confidence and self-esteem. They include: yelling, verbal abuse, including swearing, threats, ridicule, laughing at or teasing in a derogatory manner, name calling, bad mouthing a church member, spreading rumours about a church member, gossiping, telling lies to make a church member look bad.

Social
The social aspects of church bullying can be defined as such by the deliberate intention of a group or individual to isolate another church member. These include: deliberately and consistently shutting another person out of conversations, not talking to another church member at all, leaving a church member out of planned social events when all other church members are attending, everyone leaving a room when a particular church member enters the room, consistently moving seats when a particular church member sits down beside them, making negative comments about the way a church member dresses and looks.

Psychological

The psychological effects of church bullying can be very damaging. There are some aspects of bullying that seem to especially target psychological well-being including: publicly embarrassing or humiliating a particular church member, constantly changing the requirements of the ministry/serving role without telling the person, using emails to embarrass or humiliate a church member, consistently not including a particular church member in meetings relevant to their ministry area, ridiculing or devaluing a particular church member's contribution, opinion or idea, publicly criticising the effort of a particular church member, negative body language such as eye rolling, smirking and turning their back to a particular church member, especially whenever they talk.

Responding to bullying behaviours

The key principle to apply when addressing bullying is initially to address the behaviour in the least intrusive and least formal way. If the informal processes do not result in a satisfactory outcome, then more formal options can be considered.

Personal options:
- talking to someone you trust
- seeking medical attention or other help
- speaking to the perpetrator directly
- talking to your community/church leader
- talking to a senior leader in your denomination.

Informal resolution process:

An informal resolution process aims to ensure that the bullying incident is resolved as quickly as possible. Although a person has the right to make either a formal or an informal complaint, they should be encouraged to commence with the informal process first, as this can often achieve a more timely and satisfactory outcome for both parties.

No investigation or disciplinary action should be taken as a result of an informal complaint. Rather, a no-blame approach should be used to assist the individuals involved to reach an outcome that will ensure appropriate conduct in the future. The main focus is to return the individuals to beneficial participation in the community without interruption and with no further bullying behaviour.

Conciliation and mediation:

Conciliation and mediation are confidential processes that involve only the conciliator/mediator and the individuals concerned. It is acceptable, however, for the individuals to have a support person present during a conciliation meeting.

If the informal process fails to reach a resolution then the complainant should be advised that they have the right to make a formal complaint.

Formal investigation process:

It is important that a person clearly understands what to expect from making a formal complaint. For example, you may wish to inform people that:
- the investigation procedures will adhere to natural justice principles to ensure fairness for all concerned;
- an investigation will occur as soon as possible after the complaint is received; and
- an investigation will be conducted by an impartial and independent (preferably external) person who can carry out the investigation without hindrance or bias.

A formal process usually has the following steps:
1. Verbally advising the senior church/community leader
2. Lodging the complaint
3. Initial response
4. Appointment of an investigator

5. The investigation
6. Findings
7. Appeal
8. Access to counselling and/or rehabilitation
9. Review

(Adapted from "I think I am being bullied, what do I do?" and "Identifying and addressing workplace bullying", ACT WorkSafe 2012, http://www.worksafety.act.gov.au/page/view/1211#Resources, Accessed 29 October 2015)

WorkCover Australia provides guides for employers and employees in relation to responding to bullying in the workplace.

d.ii.   Sexual Violence – Harassment and Assault

Sex is a gift from God. Sexual expression is an action of intimacy, i.e. two becoming one flesh (Gen 1:24). Therefore, all sexual interactions should be actions of loving intimacy where each party is able to freely consent to the interaction.

There has been much learning in the understanding of what constitutes meaningful consent in recent years in relation to areas such as: the age of consent, states of consent e.g. sober and intellectual capacity, and also the area of coercion: e.g. no meaningful consent is possible where a person submits due to the other person's positional power or position of trust.

Disciplinary procedures for church workers should address allegations or complaints of sexual harassment and assault between adults, not only complaints relating to adults against children.

When considering whether or not a person has been sexually harassed or assaulted, it is important to remember that sexual violence can be perpetrated both in word and in action (non-contact and contact). The sexual violence continuum begins with non-contact sexual violence such as sexual comments, sexual jokes aimed at a person, verbal sexual harassment, obscene phone calls, peeping and exposure, through to contact sexual violence such as unwanted sexual touching, acts of indecency, sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault, and rape.

It is important to understand your state or territory's definitions of such acts because many words and actions on the sexual violence continuum constitute crimes.

Nationally the Sexual Discrimination Act 1984 (Australia) describes sexual harassment as an unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours or other unwelcome sexual conduct in circumstances where the person doing the harassing knows that the conduct would offend, intimidate or humiliate another person. In relation to consent in Western Australian the Legal Aid web page states that:

"To consent to having sex, a person needs to be old enough (over the legal age of consent) and must freely agree to the sexual activity. Everyone who is old enough has the right to freely decide if they want to have sex or not.

Someone who is drunk, drugged, unconscious or asleep can't freely consent. A person can't freely consent if they have been forced, tricked or threatened into having sex. If you have sex with someone who is unable to freely consent, this is sexual assault, which is a serious crime.

Consent can be taken back at any time – it doesn't matter if you've already started to have sex. If one person no longer wants sexual activity, they you have to stop.

The best way to be sure that the other person consents to any kind of sexual touching is to ask them what they want to do and check to see if they want to keep going.

In Western Australia, people under 16 years old cannot legally consent to having sex, even if they said 'yes' at the time. The age of consent is 18 years old if there is a special relationship between them, where one

person is in a position of power or authority over the other person. An example of this is the relationship between a teacher and a student, or a sports coach and a team member.

https://www.legalaid.wa.gov.au/find-legal-answers/young-people/sex-and-law/sex-and-consent (14 December 2021)

d.iii.   Domestic and/or Family Violence

Domestic and family violence includes the types of abuse listed previously but occurs within a domestic or family relationship. This is often marked by a significant imbalance of power within the household. It is common for a perpetrator to be highly controlling. One form of domestic violence has been described aptly as intimate terrorism. Another form that occurs far less often is common couple violence, where both adult partners hold roughly equal power within the relationship, and both, at times, instigate the violence. The term family violence recognises that within a household it is possible for there to be multiple perpetrators and victims: e.g. teenage child abusing parent, parent abusing grandparent.

Domestic violence causes fear, physical and/or psychological harm. It is most often (but not exclusively) violent, abusive or intimidating behaviour by a man against a woman. Living with domestic violence has a profound effect upon children and young people and may constitute a form of child abuse. (The NSW Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan, June 2010). Many forms of domestic violence are criminal offences. Physical and sexual assault is a crime whether it happens in the home or on the street.

Domestic violence can include:

- physical assault (including punching, hitting, kicking, pushing, slapping, choking, or the use of weapons)
- sexual assault (being forced to have sex or participate in sexual activities, either by watching or physically participating)
- emotional abuse (making someone feel worthless, criticising their personality, their looks, the way they dress, constantly putting someone down, threatening to hurt them, their children or pets)
- verbal abuse (including yelling, shouting, name-calling and swearing at someone)
- social abuse (being stopped from seeing friends and family, isolating someone socially or geographically)
- damaging property such as furniture, the house or pets in order to threaten or intimidate someone
- financial abuse (taking control of money, not giving someone enough money on which to survive, forcing someone to hand over their money, not letting them have a say in how it is spent).

(Adapted from "Domestic and family violence", Department of Community Services, NSW, http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/parents,-carers-and-families/domestic-and-family-violence - Accessed 2 November 2015).

Supporting a person who experiences domestic violence

When someone is ready to talk, it is important to listen to them and take the issue seriously. When someone is ready to talk:

- believe what they tell you
- focus on how they are feeling and how they are coping with the domestic violence
- let them know domestic violence is not their fault
- focus on their safety and the safety of their children
- let them know you are there for them (if this does not put your safety at risk)
- let them know about the Domestic Violence Line.

Things to avoid:

- avoid blaming the person who is disclosing abuse for the domestic violence
- avoid blaming alcohol, other drugs or mental health issues for the domestic violence behaviour
- avoid telling the person what to do
- avoid talking to the abuser about their behaviour
- avoid making negative comments about the abuser
- do not expect that the person disclosing abuse will leave the relationship.

(Adapted from "Supporting someone who experiences domestic violence", Department of Community Services, NSW, March 2007, http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/319178/dv_support_english.pdf - Accessed 2 November 2015)

d.iv. Elder Abuse

Elder abuse "occurs when there is any act occurring within a relationship where there is an implication of trust, which results in harm to an older person. Abuse can include physical, sexual, financial, psychological and social abuse and/or neglect". (endorsed at the Healthy Ageing Taskforce, 2000.)

Suspicions that abuse has occurred may be aroused by physical signs and symptoms or by the behaviour of the older person. It is important for leaders to be aware of any sudden or unusual changes in the behaviour patterns of their participants or congregation members. If someone shows one or more of the possible signs of abuse, it does not automatically mean she or he is being abused. Consider the context. Concerns that require reporting may arise from a single event or a pattern or series of events. The indicators of child abuse on pages 28-29 may be used as a guide for concerns about the elderly.

Report to your Safe Church Response Officer if you have concerns that an older person is being abused. e.g.: indicators or signs of abuse or neglect have been observed, you observe someone behaving towards an older person in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable, an older person tells you that they are being abused by another person, a patient/client, staff member or visitor tells you that they believe an older person is being abused or when you observe an action or inaction that may be considered abusive.   You can use an Anecdotal Record report form (p. 67) to report your concerns.

d.v.   Reporting Wellbeing Issues in Adults

Reporting concerns of abuse and other health issues in vulnerable adults is a complex issue. Sometimes it will be very clear what to do as in allegations of criminal activity toward an adult; e.g. sexual harassment or rape. Other times this means utilising the local health services and working with the person and their family to provide the comfort, support and access to resources and services.

As a guide:

Allegations of serious ministry misconduct or abuse by church leaders against vulnerable adults need to be reported to the BCWA.

Refer allegations against a church appointed volunteer (e.g. elder/team leader) to the local church Safe Church Response Officer, who may in turn seek appropriate assistance from BCWA. Where conduct also appears to be criminal, report to the police, or CrimeStoppers.

Report to the police where you have concerns of abuse and/or serious criminal offences by other church members (e.g. sexual or physical assault).

For a suicide attempt/threat, or other situations where a person's mental health may be placing self or others at risk of harm, contact the ambulance / police / local mental health crisis service.

For concerns about with the conduct of people with special needs (e.g. intellectual or physical disability or mental health concern) speak to your pastor or Safe Church Response Officer. They may seek advice from relevant health services.

In addition to the tables on pages 28-29, the Work Health and Safety legislation requires employers to provide physically and emotionally safe places for workers. In the church context all volunteers are considered workers. Subsequently, allegations of bullying, sexual harassment or indecency of or by a volunteer must be followed up with a process that allows natural justice to occur for all parties. Contact the BCWA for denominational processes to be used in cases of alleged bullying, harassment or abuse by or against church workers (paid and volunteer).

Exercise 2.3 – Responding to Concerns: Adults
Discuss the scenario given. You are a team member.
What do you do in following this up?

e. Responding to Concerns About Children or Young People

Child abuse is in direct opposition to Jesus' words about welcoming children (Matt 18:15) and loving one another (John 13:34). It is little wonder that addressing child abuse issues can be confronting and disturbing.

Statistics on Child Abuse

It is almost impossible to determine the amount of abuse that does occur since only that which is reported to government authorities can become part of official statistics.

Child Protection Australia 2019–20 reported:

"Of the approximately 486,300 notifications in 2019-20, about 183,300 (38%) were assessed as requiring further investigation and the rest (303,000 or 62%) were dealt with by other means, such as by being referred to a support service. (Child Protection Australia 2019-2020 AIHW Canberra: 2021, pg. 19)

"Across Australia, 11,700 infants (children aged under 1) received child protection services in 2019-20. Infants were also the most likely (38 per 1,000 children) to have received child protection services, while those aged 15-17 were least likely (24 per 1,000)." (pg. 13)

"In 2019-20, 55,300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children received child protection services, a rate of 166 per 1,000 Indigenous children. This was almost 8 times the rate for non-Indigenous children (21 per 1,000 non-Indigenous children)." (pg. 14)

While these are the gathered statistics, researchers and forensic practitioners estimate that as many as 1 in 20 men in Australia may sexually offend against a child. As many as 1 in 4 or 5 children will be sexually abused. Research has indicated that on average it takes girls 7-14 years to tell someone about their abuse and for men the average is well over 20 years, if they ever do.

e.i.   Definitions, Types and Indicators of Child Abuse

The definitions and interpretations of child abuse have broadened over the past 40 years to include neglect, emotional, sexual and physical abuse, exposure to domestic violence and more recently, sexual grooming.

The emphasis has also shifted from investigations of abuse after the fact, to the prevention of abuse through the assessment of whether a child or young person has or is likely to suffer harm. Definitions of child abuse have also begun to acknowledge the resulting harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity, and that the harm is caused often in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

ACC Child Protection Policy definition: Harm, to a Child or Young Person, is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the Child or Young Person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is

immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; or sexual abuse or exploitation; a single act, omission or circumstance; or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.

The following pages contain the behavioural and physical indicators of child abuse to assist church workers in their identification of when a child may be at risk of harm. These are not intended to be exhaustive but rather are a tool for identifying children at risk of abuse. It is important to remember that one or two indicators in isolation do not mean that a child is being abused. They must also be considered in the context of other indicators and the child's or young person's circumstances.

1. Neglect

Definition: *Continued failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child with the basic things needed for his or her proper growth and development, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care and adequate supervision.* (Source: NSW DoCS "Spot it to help stop it" brochure)

Examples: failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, medical care, attention to hygiene or supervision, inability to respond emotionally to a child or young person, depriving of or withholding physical contact or stimulation for prolonged periods, absence of social support from adults.

INDICATORS/SIGNS IN CHILDREN	INDICATORS/SIGNS IN PARENTS/CAREGIVERS
• poor standards of hygiene leading to social isolation or poor health e.g. unwashed, poor hair texture • inappropriately dressed for weather conditions • extended stays at school, public places, others' homes • extreme longing for adult affection • self-comforting behaviour, eg. rocking, sucking • delays in developmental milestones • low weight for age and/or failure to thrive and develop • untreated physical problems eg. serious nappy rash • extreme anxiety about being abandoned • child not adequately supervised for their age • scavenging or stealing food and focus on basic survival	• unable or unwilling to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical attention, safe home conditions • leaving the child without appropriate supervision • abandonment of child • withholding physical contact or stimulation for prolonged periods • unable or unwilling to provide psychological nurturing

2. Physical Abuse

Definition: *Non- accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child caused by a parent, caregiver or any other person* (Source: NSW DoCS "Spot it to help stop it" brochure). Examples: beating, shaking, lacerations, burns, fractures, poisoning, attempted suffocation, physical mutilation.

INDICATORS/SIGNS IN CHILDREN	INDICATORS/SIGNS IN PARENTS/CAREGIVERS
• unexplained bruising to face, head or neck • bruising showing the shape of the object that caused it e.g. belt buckle, lacerations and welts • explanation of injury is not consistent with the injury • abdominal pain caused by ruptured internal organs • fractures of bones • burns and scalds (including cigarette burns) • drowsiness, vomiting, fits or retinal haemorrhages • aggression or withdrawal • inappropriate clothes for weather conditions • discomfort with physical contact & emotional problems	• explanation of injury is not consistent with the injury • a parent or caregiver says that they fear injuring their child • family history of violence or their own maltreatment as a child • frequent visits with child/ren to health or other services with unexplained or suspicious injuries

3. Emotional & Psychological Abuse

Definition: *Behaviour by a parent or caregiver that destroys a child's confidence resulting in significant emotional disturbance or trauma* (Source: NSW DoCS "Spot it to help stop it" brochure). Psychological abuse damages a child's intellectual faculties and processes, including intelligence, memory, recognition, perception and moral development. The harm experienced is assessed to be detrimental in effect and significant in nature on the child's wellbeing.

INDICATORS/SIGNS IN CHILDREN	INDICATORS/SIGNS IN PARENTS/CAREGIVERS
• passive and aggressive behavioural extremes • habit disorders • feelings of worthlessness about life and themselves • inability to value others • lack of trust in people and expectations • lack of interpersonal skills necessary for adequate functioning • extreme attention-seeking behaviour • bullying • disruptiveness • persistent running away from home	• constant criticism • belittling, teasing • ignoring or withholding praise and attention • excessive or unreasonable demands • persistent hostility and severe verbal abuse • rejection and scapegoating • belief that a particular child is bad or evil • using inappropriate physical or social isolation as punishment • domestic violence

4. Sexual Abuse

Definition: *Sexual abuse is when an adult or someone who is stronger, bigger or older (includes other children) involves a child in a sexual activity by using their power over a child or taking advantage of a child's trust. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity. Bribes or threats are often used to make them participate in the activity* (Source: NSW DoCS "Spot it to help stop it" brochure).

Examples: sexual touching, sexual intercourse, sexual suggestions to children, including exposure to pornographic material, use of children in the production of pornographic videos or films, exhibitionism, child prostitution.

INDICATORS/SIGNS IN CHILDREN	INDICATORS/SIGNS IN PARENTS/CAREGIVERS
• child or child's friend telling you about it, even indirectly • describing sexual acts • excessive seductiveness • going to bed fully clothed • sexual knowledge or behaviour inappropriate for age • regressive behaviour eg. sudden return to bed- wetting • bruising or bleeding in the genital area • sexually transmitted diseases • bruising to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs • self-destructive behaviour • suicide attempts/ self-mutilation • child being in contact with a known sex offender • anorexia or over-eating • adolescent pregnancy • unexplained accumulation of money and gifts • persistent running away from home • unusual aversion to physical contact • inappropriate expressions of friendship with an adult.	• exposing a child to prostitution or pornography or using a child for pornographic purposes • intentional exposure of a child to sexual behaviour of others • previous conviction or suspicion of child sexual abuse • coercing a child to engage in sexual behaviour with other children • verbal threats of sexual abuse • denial of adolescent's pregnancy by family

5. Witnessing Domestic Violence

Definition: *"a child being present (hearing or seeing): a parent or sibling subject to physical abuse, sexual abuse or psychological maltreatment and/or the damage caused to person or property by a family member's violent behaviour"* (adapted from Australian Institute of Family Studies www. aif.gov. au).

Domestic Violence is any abusive behaviour used by one partner or family member in a relationship to gain and maintain control over another's life. It can occur in any type of domestic relationship, including spousal relationships, intimate personal relationships, family relationships and informal care relationships. It is possible for there to be multiple perpetrators and victims within the household.

Indicators that a child is observing or experiencing domestic violence may include:

INDICATORS/SIGNS IN CHILDREN
• displays of aggressive behaviour • development of phobias and insomnia • displays of anxiety • symptoms of depression • diminished self-esteem • poor academic performance and problem-solving skills • reduced social competence skills, including low levels of empathy • displays of emotional distress • physical complaints

e.ii.   Other types of abusive behaviour

There are other types of abusive behaviour which may cause harm to children that may or may not be reportable to government child protection agencies such as medical, bullying, grooming on the internet, systems abuse and spiritual abuse. These forms of abusive behaviour all need to be responded to appropriately using the church's procedure.

Spiritual Abuse

In most cases it is not reportable to a government child protection agency, although in extreme cases can be classed as emotional abuse. This may include any or all of the above pre-stated abuse types. It involves the perpetrator inappropriately using their position of authority in the church to satisfy their own needs, or using children or young people for their own benefit. Pressuring people through use of guilt language may result in guilt, shame, a strong "works" based framework for faith. For example: "*If I do this then God will love me*" or "*God will be happy with you if you do this for me*".

Bullying

In a church context bullying must not be tolerated. Instead of being laughed at, it should be reported to the ministry coordinator and senior church leader. In a children's ministry context parents of children involved need to be informed, consulted with and included in decisions relating to their child/ren.

Targets of bullying need to be loved, valued, respected and restored as appropriate to the situation. Those who demonstrate bullying behaviours must be called to account in a loving way. For further information in relation to bullying see Section d.i. Bullying Behaviours on page 21 of this workbook.

Electronic Communication: Cyber-Bullying, Social Networking and Grooming on the Internet

The explosion of electronic communications has seen a sharp increase in the number of internet-based and telecommunications-based allegations of abuse and bullying. This involves the perpetrator using any form of telecommunication, or electronic communication to: sexually groom, bully, suggest an inappropriate relationship be formed, or engage a child in sexual language or behaviours. In some cases

these interactions have led to people being charged with online grooming, or procurement of a child for sexual purposes.

In NSW the Office of the Children's Guardian includes "*inappropriate personal communication (including emails, telephone calls, text messaging, social media and web forums) that explore sexual feelings or intimate personal feelings with a child*" as part of its extended definition of sexual misconduct. It is recommended that those working with children, young people and other vulnerable persons follow a set of protocols, as well as a statement in the Code of Conduct, as to how leaders will communicate electronically with program participants, to ensure the safe use of electronic and telecommunication devices.

General principles for the use of electronic communication
We acknowledge that the use of electronic media for communication is part of everyday life, however, we need to be mindful of the position of trust and power we have been entrusted with as leaders. It is recommended that those working with children, young people and other vulnerable persons follow these general principles for the use of electronic communication:
- As far as it is practical interact electronically with children and young people as a team, not as individuals, e.g. group emails.
- In the case of communications with minors, seek parental permission beforehand.
- Leaders must not transmit, retrieve or store any communication that is: discriminatory or harassing, derogatory, obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic, defamatory, threatening, for any purpose that is illegal or contrary to your Code of Conduct.
- Do not send any electronic communication that attempts to hide your identity or represent the sender as someone else.
- Before sending the communication ask the 'boundary respecting' questions: Is this the right time, place, circumstance, and is it right for the other person for me to send this communication to them?

Sexual Grooming
Sexual grooming is a pattern of behaviour aimed at engaging a child as a precursor to sexual abuse. In some cases where positional power exists this can be a reportable matter, in most cases it is non-sexual and a precursor to the abuse.

This may include: persuading the child that a 'special' relationship exists; spending inappropriate special time with the child; inappropriately giving gifts; showing special favours to them but not to other children; allowing the child to overstep the rules; testing boundaries; undressing in front of the child; allowing the child to sit on lap; talking about sex; 'accidental' touching of genitals, etc.

In isolation, such behaviours may not indicate risk of abuse occurring, but if there is a pattern of behaviour occurring, it may indicate grooming (*NSW Working With Children Check*, 2004).

Self-Harm
A term that has historically been used to cover a broad range of behaviours. It refers to deliberately causing pain or damage to your own body and can be suicidal or non-suicidal in intent. *Self-Injury* is a type of self-harm and refers to deliberately causing pain or damage to your own body without suicidal intent.

Self-harm can take on different forms and its frequency can vary from person to person – some may do it once, while others can do it for many years. It can include:

- Cutting, burning, biting or scratching the skin
- Picking at wounds or scabs so they don't heal
- Pulling out hair, punching or hitting the body
- Taking harmful substances (such as poisons, or over the counter or prescription medications).

Source: https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/self-harm

e.iii.   Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse

Reporting to government child protection agencies is an important step in child protection. However, knowing how, what and when to report has proven to be problematic. In Western Australia we have restricted mandatory reporting, and new legislative requirements will require ministers/pastors to report from November 2022.

However, beyond legal mandatory reporting is a biblical calling to care for the vulnerable. As the church, we need to be both accountable and transparent in responding to instances of what may be child abuse. This calling includes reporting suspected and actual cases of children who are at risk of abuse.

This section will equip you with the information and process to be followed in reporting.

Possible Barriers to Protecting Children

Reporting our concerns is an important step in child protection. However, knowing how, what and when to report has proven to be problematic.

> "What can I do about this?"
> "The government will only make the situation worse!"
> "Society can't even fix this problem!"

These are all examples of what is known as discounting.

West's Discount Hierarchy relates to four levels of resistance a person has to overcome to actually respond to a possible abuse situation.

(i)   EXISTENCE - acknowledge the problem exists.
(ii)   SIGNIFICANCE - accept that there is a problem, but don't accept that it is significant.
(iii)   SOLVABILITY - accept the existence and significance of the problem, but do not believe it can be solved.
(iv)   SELF - accept the existence and significance of the problem, and that there are solutions, but believe that they, personally, cannot initiate solutions. (Source: Chris Storm: Bethany Community Support Melbourne, Presentation Paper FEELING SAFE, BEING STRONG - at the AIFS Conference 2008)

There are also a number of community attitudes as well as organisational risk factors that may contribute to creating barriers to protecting children, and in some cases may actually contribute to on-going child abuse. Community attitudes include:

- cultural acceptance of extreme physical punishment of children and the use of violence;
- acceptance of parents' ownership of children and their right to treat children as they see fit;
- the notion that the child deserved the treatment received as a result of behaviour;
- lack of desire to "get involved" in other people's business;
- fears of retaliation should a notifier's name be made known to an abuser;
- concerns about the break-up of a family unit should the abuse be exposed;
- not being prepared to expose a person of high standing in the community;
- concern by an abused person that by exposing an abuser, they will be publicly shamed.

Organisational risk factors include: staff alone with children; abuse of positional power – people in authority taking advantage of the position of power; culture of bullying; lack of leader and staff accountability; inadequate resources; lack of experience; lack of awareness; inadequate training; internal investigations as opposed to external investigations; isolated venues (Beyer et.al, 2005).

Reflection: Barriers to Reporting

Are there any community attitudes or organisational risk factors
that may be a hindrance to protecting children in your ministry?

Reasonable Grounds for Reporting

You have reasonable grounds to report abuse if:

- a child tells you they have been or are at risk of being abused;
- someone else tells you that they know of a child who has been or is at risk of being abused;
- you have concerns that the child may have been or is at risk of being abused based on their physical appearance or behaviour.

Many people are hesitant about making a judgment about abuse occurring in case their perception is incorrect. In some cases what may appear to be cause for concern could be a "cry for help" by a child or young person. Investigators are specially trained to handle the matter sensitively and with care for all concerned.

You are not required to establish or investigate if abuse has occurred. Your role is only to report your reasonable suspicions or concerns of abuse, including the grounds for your concerns.

There are two types of reporting:

- **Anecdotal** Record (Red Flags). An anecdotal record is a short written account regarding a leader's concerns about a child or a disclosure made by a child. Before making a report to a supervisor or a government agency, it is important to make an anecdotal record of what led to your concerns.

- **Incident** Report: Risk of Harm. This provides the leader and the SCRO with a more detailed reporting form. It may be that a leader has received a disclosure or that a SCRO has received a number of anecdotal records about a child and now wishes to make a formal report.

Samples of both Anecdotal Record and Incident Report are located on pages 68-69.

e.iii.i   Anecdotal Reporting (Red Flags)

Concerns of Abuse

The most common type of report received by government child protection agencies is when another person identifies the indicators of abuse without the child having directly disclosed actual abuse. State government child protection agencies have different requirements for reporting concerns. BCWA & WA State reporting obligations are outlined on pages 36-36. However, it is good practice to report all of your concerns to your *Safe Church Response Officer* regardless of whether you are legally mandated to report or not, as we are all voluntary reporters.

A fundamental question in considering whether we have a reasonable concern is: "How is the child experiencing this?" This is a *child focussed approach,* rather than an approach that first asks "What will happen to me? or "What will happen to... the alleged perpetrator, the care-giver, the leader?" The child focussed approach is based on the best interests of the child, and is essential if we are to truly protect the vulnerable.

However, even with the child's best interests in mind we may be given to subjective decisions based upon our own judgment, therefore it is useful to apply the indicators of abuse to the equation before we make a judgment. We might call these indicators **Red Flags** alerting us to potential problems. The indicators are objective and can help us make a decision based upon what is best for the child, rather than being based on our own opinion.

Other concerns

You may find that you have other concerns about a person's behaviour toward others. It is advisable to let your supervisor know of any concerns, child protection related or not, including adult to adult conduct. It is recommended that you report such concerns to your *Safe Church Response Officer* and record them as a *Safe Church Anecdotal Record*.

e.iii.ii Incident Reporting (Risk of Harm)

Disclosures

Whenever a child or young person tells you that someone is harming them, this is known as a disclosure. The fact that a child or young person tells you that they have been abused means that they have a high respect for you and that they trust you greatly, because disclosures are rare. Therefore, it is important that you respond appropriately.

When Receiving a Disclosure

DO
1.   DO LISTEN...do not add anything to what the child says. You will need to write down the child's words, as accurately as possible.
2.   DO REASSURE...the child that they have done the right thing in speaking to you.
3.   DO INFORM...the child that you need to tell people who can help.
4.   DO ENSURE...that the child is not in immediate danger.

NOTE: *Keep it brief* – this is not the only time the child will have to share their story and you may actually jeopardise an investigation, so you should not have a long conversation about this.

DON'T
1.   DO NOT INVESTIGATE - You don't need to prove this. Don't ask leading questions.
2.   DO NOT MAKE PROMISES - You may not be able to stop the abuse.
3.   DO NOT SHARE - You cannot tell anyone who does not need to know, tell only your supervisor and/or Safe Church Response Officer.

Supporting a Child After Disclosure

In a ministry situation it is highly likely that you will continue to have contact with the child after a disclosure. It is important to recognise that the child has disclosed to you because they trust you and feel safe with you.

As you continue to *nurture* and *minister* to the child it may be useful to be mindful of the following: create a calm environment, engage in appropriate relationships, continue to include the child, provide an ordered program, foster appropriate behaviours, and focus attention on the safe space.

Self Care for Leaders Receiving a Disclosure

Each person has a unique response to receiving a disclosure or witnessing abuse. There may be some common reactions such as: shock, anger, sympathy for the victim and frustration. As a leader it can be very distressing to find yourself in this situation.

It is important to debrief by verbally and emotionally, "unloading" your feelings about receiving a disclosure or witnessing abuse with your *Safe Church Response Officer*. If you do not debrief in these situations, it is possible that your effectiveness in your ministry could be negatively impacted.

It is recommended that you talk to your ministry team leader or *Safe Church Response Officer* regarding your feelings about what has been disclosed, or what you have witnessed. You do not need to tell them the details of the abuse, simply how you feel about it, and how you feel about your role in supporting the child. Your *Safe Church Response Officer* can then arrange a time to debrief with you.

Some people may have severe reactions to disclosure which may in some cases have an invasive impact on their ability to function effectively within their ministry and life roles. (E.g. eating and sleeping disturbances). If this occurs it is advisable to seek additional counselling support.

e.iv   BCWA Reporting Procedure

Who reports possible abuse?

Safe Church Response Officer (SCRO)

1. **Reporting.** It will be necessary to appoint a Safe Church Response Officer for child protection and other Safe Church concerns in your church. This will be either your senior minister or senior church leader.
2. **Pastoral Care.** The position of Safe Church Response Officer will also be, by its nature, a pastoral role to the person who is reporting. The SCRO must ensure that sufficient care and debriefing occurs for the person making the report.

How to Report

When a child discloses abuse, or that they are at risk, or when reasonable grounds have been established, follow these steps:

1. **Report** to the Safe Church Response Officer (SCRO). If the SCRO is not on site or/and the child's or children's immediate safety is at risk (and when a disclosure situation occurs), report immediately to your team leader.
2. **Complete** a church-based reporting form, with the help of your SCRO.
3. **The SCRO then takes appropriate action. This may include a phone call to the Department of Child Protection (DCP), or to the police.** When calling DCP, call the closest DCP to the home of the child (see website for details). In cases where "you believe a child or young person is in need of immediate assistance contact the Western Australia Police on 131444 or 000 for life threatening emergencies". In most cases, feedback is provided to reporters about actions taken as a consequence of their report. When you make a report, DCP will inform you about the initial action that will be taken. The SCRO will where appropriate consult with the church leadership team, remembering to keep the matter as confidential as possible. The SCRO is encouraged to seek advice from the BCWA Ministry Centre. Contact details may be found at www.baptistwa.asn.au

Ongoing support: The church's role does not end here. This is only the beginning. Our role is now to support the child and family as much as is practical and possible.

Record Keeping: It is important to keep records of your concerns for a number of reasons:
- It eliminates inaccuracies in information that may come from verbal transfer of information.
- It provides the basis for the information to be entered onto a report form.
- One anecdotal record kept and submitted to a supervisor on its own may not warrant a report to a government agency; however, many records about the same child may warrant a report.

Mandatory Reporting

The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. All jurisdictions possess mandatory reporting requirements; however these vary across Australia.

Who in WA?

Court personnel; family counsellors; family dispute resolution practitioners, arbitrators or legal practitioners representing the child's interests. Section 160 of the Western Australia Family Court Act 1997.

Licensed providers of child care or outside-school-hours care services. Child Care Services (Child Care) Regulations 2006; Regulation 84 Education and Care Services National Law (Western Australia).

Doctors; nurses and midwives; teachers; boarding supervisors and police officers. Section 124B of the Children and Community Services Act 2004: Mandatory to report belief on reasonable grounds that child sexual abuse has occurred or is occurring.

The following groups will be implemented as mandatory reporters over the next few years, starting with Ministers of Religion from November 2022. The other areas include: early childhood workers, out-of-home care workers, registered psychologists, school counsellors and youth justice workers. The Children and Community Services Amendment Act 2021 (Amendment Act)

Where to Make Reports

An online portal is available for mandatory reporters: http://mandatoryreporting.dcp.wa.gov.au.

To report a concern, contact the Department for Child Protection. In business hours you should contact the department's district office closest to where the child lives; or the Crisis Care Unit after hours. Details can be obtained from their website www.dcp.wa.gov.au.

The DCP website advises the following in relation to reporting (accessed 12 July 2016):

Reporting: Special Cases

1. School Ministry

Those engaging in state/church school ministry programs should make sure they are familiar with the policy of the school about reporting. Teachers forming a reasonable belief should inform the school Principal, unless the Principal is the alleged abuser. Ensure that your church based *Safe Church Response Officer* is also informed of the situation.

The Safe Church Response Officer will then phone the school Principal to ask for proof of action taken, e.g. report number. If the principal advises they are not making a report, or do not provide a reference number, your *Safe Church Response Officer* may make their own report.

2. Allegations against employees (paid or voluntary)

When an allegation of harm is made against an employee or volunteer or where a leader exhibits behaviours that might be deemed as abusive or "ministry misconduct", the first step is to seek the advice the BCWA. They will assist you in following the reporting process and offer further support.

Commitment 2
Responding to allegations of suspected abuse

BCWA recommend that you make the following commitment:

- We require all leaders to report disclosure of suspicions of child abuse using the procedure in the Safe Church Workbook for BCWA.

- When a leader has an allegation of misconduct made against them, the BCWA Response to Complaint protocols will be followed.

Chapter 3: Safe Leaders

This chapter aims to develop awareness of:
- the rationale behind the need for safe recruiting practices
- the need for ongoing supervision and training of leaders
- a leadership code of conduct
- complaints against leaders.

a. Church Leaders

Elders, deacons, pastors, councils, team leaders, ministry coordinators, volunteers, helpers - who are our leaders? This is a good question. In this manual the term 'leader' is a generic one which means anyone who is given a position of trust or authority in the local congregation to work in roles of service in the church, both paid and unpaid.

But are all volunteers' leaders? What if you only do a small job at the church? Experience has taught the church that this comes down to the way that others perceive the role, not how the volunteer perceives their role.

Consider the 'other person' as a new person coming to the church for the first time, or as a vulnerable person, such as a small child or person with an intellectual disability. If that person sees you 'doing' a task at church, how will they see you? It would be reasonable that they would think that you must be someone who works here, an important person, a person with some degree of influence, and possibly a leader. So does that make all volunteers leaders? Maybe, maybe not. It does mean, at minimum, that all volunteers are representatives of the church, and that all volunteers could be perceived by the most vulnerable as a trusted person.

In this light, when a church appoints a volunteer or paid leader (helpers included) to a position of service, they are saying, "We trust this person to represent God for us.", "We trust this person to not make the good news of Jesus into bad news by harming others."

When leaders understand their position properly, they will no longer see themselves as "just a helper" but rather as a minister of reconciliation, empowered by God to spiritually lead others. Rather than a job to be done, ministry will be a privilege, a responsibility, a position of delegated authority to influence others for God. When a person offers to volunteer for service, even if it is a very small role, the senior leaders in the church have a duty of care for that person's safety, and also a responsibility to others, to ensure they are a safe person to represent the church.

Safe leaders respect other people's boundaries, have other people's best interests at heart, are led by God, and are in accountable and transparent teams.

Exercise 3.1 – Leadership Qualities
What qualities do you look for in leaders?

b. Due Diligence

As well as our pastoral and biblical mandate for careful selection, screening and supervision of all church workers, as an entity the church has legal and insurance responsibilities for acting with transparency and rigour in this important task of ensuring workers are safe. 'Due diligence' is a legal term referring to the care that must be taken when:

Appointing Leaders: This includes properly screening, interviewing, checking a potential leader's/employee's background and contacting a potential leader's referees.

Supervising leaders: A church may exercise sufficient care in the hiring of an individual, but still be legally accountable for acts of abuse on the basis of negligent supervision. Negligent supervision is a failure to exercise sufficient care in the ongoing supervision of a worker.

b.i. Appointment of Leaders

Thorough recruitment, screening and selection of leaders is important for Safe Church ministry. Recruitment and screening is ultimately the responsibility of senior leadership of the church. However, leaders and helpers are often selected by ministry co-ordinators and program (event) leaders.

The following considerations may provide some helpful guidelines:
- Determine who has the authority to appoint leaders.
- Determine how the recruitment procedure (below) will be used and who will implement each step.
- Determine who has the authority to ask a leader to step down from a ministry or step aside for a period of time.

Once a potential leader has been selected through recruitment and screening, it is advisable to formally appoint them. This method of appointment will vary from church to church.

Reflection: Appointment of Leaders
Consider your ministry or church.
Who has the authority to appoint and to remove a leader?
What process do you use?

A Suggested Appointment / Recruitment Process

A Safe Church Recruitment Process should be carried out for all volunteer and paid workers as it answers important pastoral, legal and insurance questions about the people who represent your church as workers. This is an important tool for ensuring safety and that senior leadership have fulfilled legal due diligence with relation to recruitment.

Pre-Recruitment

Identify the Role and length of time of the role to be filled.
All appointments should be to clearly defined roles, having clear expectations and defined start and end dates for the position.
- **Rostered helpers:** (ad-hoc helpers on a roster) help once a month or less, not a part of the regular ministry team, must not be given responsibility for or left alone with a group of children or vulnerable people.
- **Team members**: appointed by the church to be in a ministry team must be over 18yrs if caring for minors; accountable to their team leader.
- **Junior team members**: (under 18) take on valuable roles under adult supervision.
- **Team Leaders**: have responsibility for a ministry team, program or event; team leaders are accountable to their ministry coordinator.
- **Ministry Coordinators**: have an oversight role over many programs. The coordinator is responsible for ensuring that all programs and events within an area operate according to the policies and procedures of the church.
- **Senior Leadership**: persons who have ultimate responsibility to approve and oversee the ministry of the local church: pastors, elders, deacons, local church board members, governance groups.

Form Recruitment Teams

It is good practice for this team to include representatives of both genders. In most cases the team needs no more than 2-3 people. Include the team leader and ministry coordinator.

Minimum attendance policy

Where it is possible, have a minimum qualifying period under which any prospective volunteer must be an adherent of the local church. BCWA Safe Church Policy recommends a minimum 6 months church attendance.

Appointment / Recruitment

1. **Safe Ministry Screening/Application Forms: (all roles).**
   a) Application for Safe Church Leadership (pages 69-70) – including at least 2 referees. Where any of the questions on the back of the form have been ticked 'yes', a conversation should be had with the applicant and a risk management process included as part of the recruitment process.
   b) Working with Children Check (if ministry involves minors under 18yrs).
   c) Police Checks (the WWCC does not cover all criminal history).
   d) Referee checks conducted.
   e) Endorsement. The name of the applicant is shown to the senior church leader (or the governing body such as a board) for endorsement as a volunteer. The senior church leadership bear the ultimate responsibility for recruitment of safe leaders.

2. **Position Interview (for all roles except rostered helpers).** Once the applicant has completed the Safe Church Leadership, government and referee checks and has been endorsed or cleared to volunteer for your church, a position interview should be undertaken to explore whether the applicant is suited for the role. This interview should be carried out by the recruitment team for the specific ministry in which they are seeking to serve.

3. **Induction (for all roles).** Ensure all leaders have received appropriate information/induction training to enable them to successfully share in the ministry. This induction process should include prayer for the leader and communication that this person is an endorsed leader. A Safe Church Awareness workshop should also be attended within the first year of ministry.

4. **Ministry Reviews (all except rostered helpers).** After the length of time set for the life of the ministry program and team, organise a ministry review. This process should be made clear to leaders at the time of appointment, as part of the induction process. This provides an opportunity for leaders recommit or step aside from roles, which is important for the health of committed teams.

b.ii   Supervision

Although thorough recruitment is essential, it is equally important that leaders are supported through loving ministry supervision. For example: A potential leader may have great motivation for ministry and all the right gifts for leading in a ministry, at age 22. Their interview to ascertain their suitability for the role may be the best you have ever conducted and their application for ministry and referees may be glowing. However, will that same leader be appropriate for the role in 3 years' time? What life pressures such as children, death of loved ones, marriage, work, and housing arrangements are impacting upon the leader? How will these impact his/her ability to lead others?

The components of healthy ministry supervision are: clear expectations, adequate ministry support for leaders, a commitment to develop leaders, a clear set of boundaries (Code of Conduct) for leaders, and well communicated processes for handling conflict and complaints against leaders. (See section c. Responding to Allegations of Ministry Misconduct, Abuse and/or Managing Conflicts.)

Expectations

Supervision cannot take place unless there are clearly understood expectations in both directions.

As a ministry leader you could be expected to:
- commit to the aims of the ministry
- support other ministry team leaders
- fulfil your ministry role as described to you by your ministry co-ordinator
- undergo any training required for your ministry position
- attend ministry team meetings as required
- embrace the church's Code of Conduct

As a ministry co-ordinator you could be expected to:
- commit to the aims of the ministry
- support and supervise ministry leaders
- fulfil your ministry role as described to you by your senior church leader
- undergo any training required for your ministry position
- embrace the church's Code of Conduct
- ensure that all leaders are screened, appointed and inducted effectively into ministry roles.
- ensure that your ministry program has been approved by senior church leadership
- ensure that your ministry program meets the requirements for Safe Leaders and Safe Programs

As a person in a ministry role within the church you could expect that your senior church leadership:
- provide mechanisms to support and supervise all leaders and ministry coordinators in their roles
- ensure resources (people, financial, administrative access and equipment) are available for approved ministry programs
- provide opportunities to access approved ministry training

Reflection: Ministry Expectations
Consider your ministry or church.
How realistic are the ministry expectations above?
Which aspects would your leadership find difficult to implement?
How could you communicate the expectations to those in ministry roles?
What mechanism could you use to monitor the degree to which expectations
are being met by those in ministry and senior church leadership?

Support for Leaders

It is important that the church senior leadership ensures that formal or informal support is provided for all leaders. It is important that all leaders and team members have a clear understanding of lines of responsibility, to whom they can go to for support, and how to address conflicts and concerns.

Commit to Leadership Development

Developing leaders is another way to ensure healthy teams. This development should include things like regular team meetings, praying together, eating together and planning together. It is also advisable to invest in leadership development, both through in-house training and external conferences. This may include a budget item for in-services and the like.

Reflection: Support
What type of support is helpful from your ministry leaders
and church leadership?

Clear Boundaries: Code of Good Leadership Practices (Code of Conduct)

The *Code of Good Leadership Practices* (Code of Conduct) is helpful for ensuring that leaders are clear on boundaries, given that they have been given delegation authority and a position of power to spiritually influence others. It simply outlines appropriate ministry leadership boundaries, rather than assuming that people know the boundaries.

Codes are **not laws to be added to grace**; they are expressions of our respect and commitment to each other's safety. Consider the code as a way of saying to your team "*I will love you by looking after your best interests. I will help you not put yourself into a high risk situation.*" In this way team members hold each other accountable. It is about peer mentoring and accountability, not wielding a big stick!

The BCWA has published a Code of Good Leadership Practices. A copy can be found on pages 62-63.
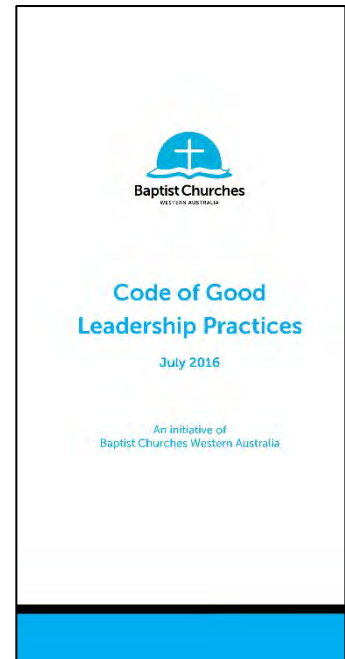
Exercise 3.2 – Code of Good Leadership Practices
Discuss how to apply the Code of Good Leadership Practices to the scenario on the screen?
Consider the steps the program leader should take.

c. Responding to Allegations of Ministry Misconduct, Abuse and/or Managing Conflicts.

The senior leadership in the church needs to be prepared to manage conflicts, grievances and allegations of ministry misconduct and/or abuse between leaders, or between program participants and their leaders.

Our pastoral, ethical, legal, denominational, risk management and insurance implications should all be considered as part of the establishment of these processes.

These processes should be put in writing and clearly communicated to all workers (paid and volunteer). This may be done as part of the induction process, and is to be followed when conflicts, grievances, or allegations of ministry misconduct and/or abuse occur.

It is important that all response processes that involve a child or group of children are child centric and accessible to the children.

It is recommended that you seek advice from experts when implementing processes with children. It is also recommended that your church actively and openly communicates your process for responding to grievances and allegations of misconduct to all those who are a part of your church.

The National Principle for Child Safe Organisations 6 states:

Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused:

a. The institution has a child-focused complaint handling system that is understood by children, staff, volunteers and families.

b. The institution has an effective complaint handling policy and procedure which clearly outline roles and responsibilities, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints and obligations to act and report.

c. Complaints are taken seriously, responded to promptly.

Several areas to consider when establishing processes for conflict resolution and responding to allegations of misconduct and/or abuse are outlined below:

c.i.   Procedural Fairness (Natural Justice)

Natural Justice needs to be extended to all parties. This includes ensuring:
- The person who is the subject of the allegation(s) is informed of the substance, with as much detail as possible, of the allegation(s) made against them.
- The person who is the subject of the allegation is provided with a reasonable opportunity to put forward their case, either in writing, or otherwise.
- Reasonable inquiries or assessment of disputed facts are undertaken before decisions are made/conclusions reached.
- All relevant available evidence, both supporting and refuting the allegation(s), is considered.
- The investigation is conducted without undue delay.
- Those deciding on a case have no conflict of interest in the matter, that they act fairly and without bias

(adapted from NSW Ombudsman: Child Protection in the Workplace 2004).

c.ii.   Local Level Responses

Where conflict, grievances and/or minor breaches of the Code of Conduct occur, in most instances these can be handled at a local level with gentleness and love, and with the view to restoring the leader. The use of the Code of Good Leadership Practices in tandem with a clear conflict resolution/grievance procedure is essential.

However, where conflict escalates, or the nature of the misconduct is found to breach denominational/ethical boundaries or is found to include abusive behaviours, the process should also allow for an escalation of the investigation to the appropriate denomination and/or government authorities.

The local response should also include regular communication with your workers (volunteer and paid) as to how the local church will respond when allegations of serious misconduct, sexual harassment, criminal activity and/or abuse are alleged.

Local level responses should include:

1.   **An unbiased person/mediator** (or team) who is/are not directly related to the program, e.g. people from the leadership team who are approachable, would be appropriate candidates. The role of this person/team is to be an unbiased mediator.

2.   **Work towards reconciliation and forgiveness** as a goal in dealing with problems or difficulties in a church context. Matthew 18:15-20 provides a suggested process to bring about reconciliation. Note: not appropriate in cases of alleged abuse or where power imbalances make Matthew 18 more than it was intended to be, i.e. restoration of a person who has sinned.

3.   **Determine a course of action** based on evidence gathered by the mediator.

4.   **Clear communication** of the grievance process, and when the process has been used, carefully communicate the course of action to be taken to those who need to know about the outcomes.

c.iii.   Role of Your Denomination

Where conflict escalates or the nature of the misconduct is found to breach denominational/ethical boundaries or is found to include abusive behaviours, the process should also allow for an escalation of the investigation to the appropriate denominational and/or government authorities.

In the case of allegations of serious misconduct or abuse, contact BCWA (or your denominational representative). It is important that senior church leaders know, understand and follow their denominational response to misconduct processes.

c.iv.   Contact with the media

If you are contacted by the media in relation to a critical incident or serious misconduct matter refer them to your senior church leader. They in turn should consult your denomination. Often a denominational representative is the best, and may even be the only one authorised to make a statement to the media. Baptist Churches should contact BCWA.

Reflection: Managing Complaints and Conflict
Do you have a clear process for handling complaints against leaders?
Is everyone clear on the process?
Does your team understand your denominational processes?
Who is included in the local church response team who will manage any complaints?

c.v.   Legal and Insurance Implications

Confession of Illegal Activity Under State Law

There are occasions where people wish to and/or are given the opportunity to 'confess' past sin in order to experience forgiveness and freedom from the secrets that bind them. When sin involves illegal activity it puts the person hearing the confession in a situation where they may be required to report the admission. In some States, the law makes it illegal for person/s hearing the confession to not report this crime. In such situations please seek advice from BCWA (or your denominational office) as to relevant legislation and help in managing such allegations or confessions.

Known Sexual Offenders in Congregations

The restorative nature of the gospel means that no one is outside the reaches of God's love. God's restoration and grace extend to all people, including those who may have committed past sexual offences, even against children. However, such offences do have some lifelong consequences. One consequence is that in most instances, there is an insurance implication (exclusion) related to known past sexual offenders attending your church. If you have a concern in relation to a possible known sexual offender, or person who exhibits sexual boundary straying, speak to your Senior Pastor or senior leadership of your local church. Advice should be sought from your denomination in such circumstances.

Australian Baptist Ministries, in collaboration with the state and territory Baptist Unions and the Baptist Insurance Services, have developed a process in response to persons of concern for Baptist Churches. This process aims to ensure that all reasonable measures have been put in place to ensure safe ministry occurs with persons of concern (see pages 65-66).

Sexual Harassment

The Sex Discrimination Act 1984 defines sexual harassment as an unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours or other unwelcome sexual conduct in circumstances where the person doing the harassing knows that the conduct would offend, intimidate or humiliate another person. Sexual conduct includes statements of a sexual nature to a person, or in the presence of a person, whether orally or in writing.

The church will not tolerate any form of sexual harassment. Any complaints made to leadership at any level are to be referred immediately to the denomination and an appropriate complaints process will be put in place.

Reasonable steps include: specific instructions not to sexually harass other employees; training of employees on what behaviour amounts to sexual harassment; a policy outlining employee's responsibility not to sexually harass other employees.

The National Work, Health and Safety (WHS) Legislation makes it essential to provide a fair and just process for all workers who make sexual harassment allegations

Sexual harassment alleged to be perpetrated by any church volunteer may also have insurance implications such as activating the Known Sexual Offenders Exclusion on the church's insurance policy. We recommend all such cases be reported to the police and that local senior church leadership be in contact with your insurer and seek independent legal advice.

Reporting To Your Insurance Company
Depending upon the seriousness of the allegation of misconduct it is advisable to contact your insurance broker or denominational insurance representative to disclose the incident. This is particularly important where there is the possibility of future claims to be made by victims of abuse and/or serious misconduct. Insurance cover in terms of liability or office holders' insurance may be impacted if the disclosure being made by the insured is not made in the same year the possible liability is known about by the insured.

If you are insured through the Baptist Insurance Services, we recommend that you contact the Insurance Officer immediately if you:
- Receive a verbal complaint which cannot be easily solved and without expense
- Receive a letter threatening legal action from an individual
- Receive a solicitor's letter threatening legal action
- Receive a writ/summons/subpoena/legal court document
- Have a contentious employee termination

d. Self-Care as Church Leaders

Healthy church leaders maintain good self-care boundaries by ensuring that they look after themselves. Maintaining self-care boundaries in ministry is an expression of loving yourself as Jesus loves you. The concepts of ongoing supervision, coaching, and mentoring can all be important tools for ensuring that you are caring for yourself in ministry. Continuing accreditation programs for recognised ministers are another positive mechanism which assists in ensuring that those in pastoral ministry remain healthy. Self-care in ministry relates to ensuring that your health and well-being is in the best place it can be to exercise your various ministry gifts. Be proactive by considering these three (3) key areas: life giving activities; monitoring well-being and taking action when at risk.

Life-giving activities

Life-giving activities are those that lift you up, that lighten your mood and refresh you as opposed to being life−draining. These often energise you, are pleasant and rewarding. They will often link into your areas of passion within your ministry role. However, it is also important to consider activities that are not linked to your ministry role such as: time with God (e.g. bible reading and prayer), hobbies, family time, connecting with others, being kind with yourself (e.g. remembering that it is ok to be upset or worried or frustrated), "treating" yourself in some way, seeking out calming activities, taking a break. Engaging in life-giving activities that are not related to your ministry role is important for keeping a clear perspective, particularly in times when ministry is hard, or when conflicts occur in ministry. It also helps with recovery from the 'giving out' nature of ministry. Remember, Jesus in his earthly ministry often retreated to be with his Father. In considering life-giving activities, ensure you are attending to all of your senses as well as all perspectives of your life, i.e. emotional, physical, cognitive (mental) and spiritual well-being.

Monitoring well-being

Well-being needs to be considered from multiple perspectives. It may be helpful to consider various perspectives using the metaphor of four water tanks representing our physical, emotional, cognitive and spiritual levels. Ask yourself, how full is each of my tanks?

- What is contributing to your level in each tank?
- What life-draining activities or circumstances are contributing to any low levels?
- What life-giving activities might enhance the levels of each tank?
- Are you in adequate shape to be fulfilling your ministry role at the moment? If the answer is no, then what actions might you need to take?

Taking action when at risk

Once a person has ascertained that they are not in good shape for ministry by either using the "water tanks" metaphor or some other method, it is important that they speak to their supervisor to discuss their situation at this particular time. It may mean that they need to have a holiday, or a break from their role/s for a time; have their role tasks adjusted or to have more support in the practicalities of fulfilling their role. Whatever is considered in discussion with a supervisor, it is important to note that if a person has determined that their well-being is at risk if they continue as is, then something needs to change. This is part of a supervisor's duty of care towards the person.

Self-Care after trauma

There are times in ministry when a church worker can be exposed to personal trauma. This might be as a result of situations like conflict in the church; misconduct of a church leader; death or serious injury of someone in the church or inappropriate behaviours and interactions in church life.

Each person has a unique response to being involved in situations where they feel traumatised. Even though general principles of self-care apply in most situations, individuals will most likely have some self-care needs that are unique to them.

Some general principles in self-care after trauma might include:

- If your personal functioning has been impacted, consider taking time out of role for a period
- Advise your supervisor if you have been impacted by trauma in the context of your ministry role
- Consider if you may benefit from professional debriefing and counselling
- Consider what life-giving activities may be of value in assisting you to move towards healing from trauma
- Other than professional therapists, consider who may be able to assist you to process the situation that led to the trauma and assist you to move towards healing
- Consider how your physical environment may be adjusted to assist you to move towards healing from trauma
- Consider what changes need to be made in your ministry role to minimise likelihood of further trauma

Commitment 3
Appointment and Supervision

BCWA recommend that you make the following commitment:

- We will recruit using the BCWA Application for Ministry Endorsement process.

- We will screen all prospective leaders before they are appointed.

- We will require all leaders in child/young person related ministry to obtain a WA Working with Children Check.

- We will have a minimum church attendance policy for all prospective volunteer leaders.

- We commit to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for leaders.

- We require all leaders to agree to follow the Code for Good Leadership Practices.

Chapter 4: Safe Programs

This chapter aims to develop awareness of:
- a process for gaining approval for ministry
- management of risks in ministry programs
- safe church environments
- responding to accidents and incidents

a. Safety in Programs

A safe program ensures safe spiritual, physical and emotional environments. Consideration is given to the participants' ages and cultural backgrounds. Safe programs are prepared for the fact that some activities or situations present more inherent risks than others. Safe programs are transparent and accountable in relation to procedures and relationships.

The following recommendations may mean rethinking how to provide programs in our church communities. You will need to take the time to carefully work through them with your leaders.

a.i. Yearly Approval for Ministry

The local church senior leadership is ultimately responsible for any activities that take place in the name the church. For this reason the local church senior leadership should approve programs and activities prior to their commencement. There are a number of considerations to be mindful of when establishing a ministry event or program. These considerations might be recorded for accountability purposes in an approval for ministry process. There is a *Permission to Proceed* form as a guide to assist in the implementation of this process (p. 71).

a.ii. Managing Event and Program Risks

Risk is the exposure to the possibility of such things as economic or financial loss or gain, physical damage, injury or delay, as a consequence of pursuing or not pursuing a particular course of action. The concept of risk includes: the perception that something could happen, the likelihood of it occurring and consequences if it does occur.
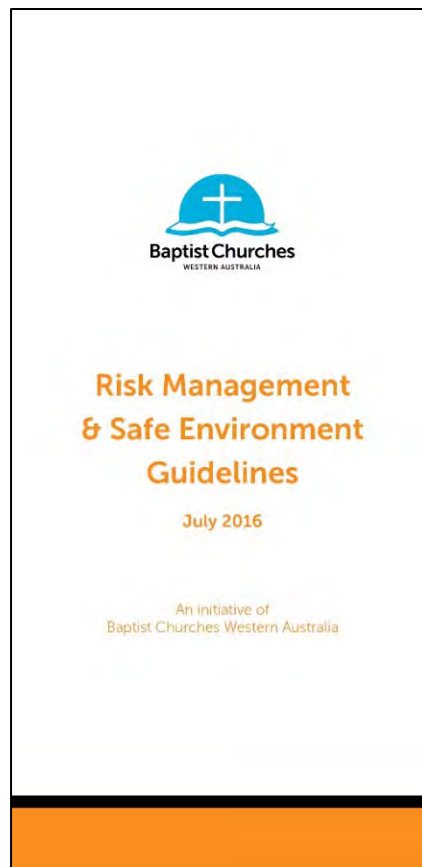
Every ministry program, event or activity has risks. Some are avoidable while others are not. Some risks will be managed at a whole church level (e.g. due diligence in relation to leaders), whilst other risks will require assessment and management at an individual program and activity risk.

It is important to identify, assess and then eliminate or reduce these individual event or program risks.

We recommend the use of an *activity risk assessment* process to help manage the individual risks in your program. The process should consider the identification, assessment and reduction/elimination of risks. You should also consider not only the physical but also the emotional and spiritual environment. We also recommend that you consult your insurer for more information on assessing and managing program risks. Baptist Insurance Services (BIS) has issued the **Risk Management Guide for Churches** to each Baptist Church in Western Australia. If you require additional copies, please contact the BIS Office.

The BCWA recommend adoption of the Risk Management and Safe Environment Guidelines to assist with the development of procedures to ensure safe programs (see pages 64-65).

What is Risk Management?

Risk management is one of the ways that you can demonstrate that you have fulfilled your duty of care to those leading and participating in your programs and events: that you have given thought to how you can 'love your neighbour'. Risk management provides a transparent process for the planning and preparation of activities, as well as the process of managing your church's exposure to potential liabilities. It does this by setting aside time to identify risks in order to prevent or reduce them, and by providing funds to meet any liability if it occurs. It can be a useful exercise to do a risk assessment for your ministry/program at least annually.

a.ii.i   Conducting a Risk Assessment

1. **Understand the context of your activities:** What is taking place, where and with whom?

2. **Identify risks:** What types of thing can go wrong within your context? How and why would they occur? The perils within an activity generally arise from people, equipment and the environment. Risk levels increase when multiple perils are present.

   Activity-based risks. These potential risks can be related to dangers associated with specific activities, eg rafting.
   Structural risks. These are related to the manner in which the ministry or church is structured. Includes accepted behaviours, lack of supervision of leaders, leadership being inaccessible by victims of abuse, lack of implemented safe church procedures.

3. **Analyse risks:** To assess level of risk, the consequences of a risk being realised and the likelihood of this occurring are considered. Activities can be deemed to be high, medium or low risk activities. The hallmarks of a high risk activity may also be present for an individual in what has been classified as a medium or even low risk activity. Where deciding upon activities for your ministry it may be useful to ask yourself the following:
   - Could this be classified as a high risk activity?
   - Is there a high likelihood for damage or trauma?
   - Does the benefit of this activity outweigh the possible risks that may be involved?
   - Can the activity be changed to reduce the possible risks?
   - Are there critical incident and emergency procedures in place if required?
   - Does the ministry or church have suitably trained and qualified people to address critical incidents or emergencies?
   - Would the activities be covered by your insurance?

   Note: It is advisable to contact your Insurer if you are unsure whether your activity will be covered. E.g. car rallies; Off-road events such as 4x4 days; water activities; shooting; and camping all have particular risks. The Insurance Officer of the Baptist Insurance Services will be able to advise and help you manage risks for such events.

   Consequences are rated along a scale from very minor to severe, while likelihood is rated from highly likely through to extremely rare. You could use a risk matrix, or if your denomination has access to an on-line system, use this to analyse the level of risk.

4. **Treat risks:** Once risks have been identified and analysed, their "treatment" can be considered. Treatment involves a choice of management strategies depending on the level of risk:
   - Retain risk: The activity is continued, as the risk level is low.
   - Minimise risk: Use safety practices to minimise the risk to an acceptable level.
   - Eliminate risk: The risk is removed completely by eliminating the activity.
   - Transfer risk: Transfer decision making responsibility to a more experienced person, or check with your insurance company to see if they will transfer the risk to themselves.

   You will need to write an Action Plan for risks, when retaining or minimising the risk:

Example of an action plan:

Risk: Burn from a kettle in the church kitchen.

Consequence: medical treatment from major injury may need to be sought.

Likelihood (potential / frequency): could happen some time

Risk level: (medium - low)

Action plan

1. Ensure kettle is on a bench in the kitchen, with cord not hanging down.
2. If kettle is moved to the edge of the bench, move to the back.
3. Do not allow small children into the kitchen area unattended.
4. During the use of kettle, ensure no children are around the bench in the service area.
5. Communicate the risk and action plan: Ensure all leaders are aware of this risk. Keep participants away from the area.

The following diagram helps demonstrate the above process for managing risk:
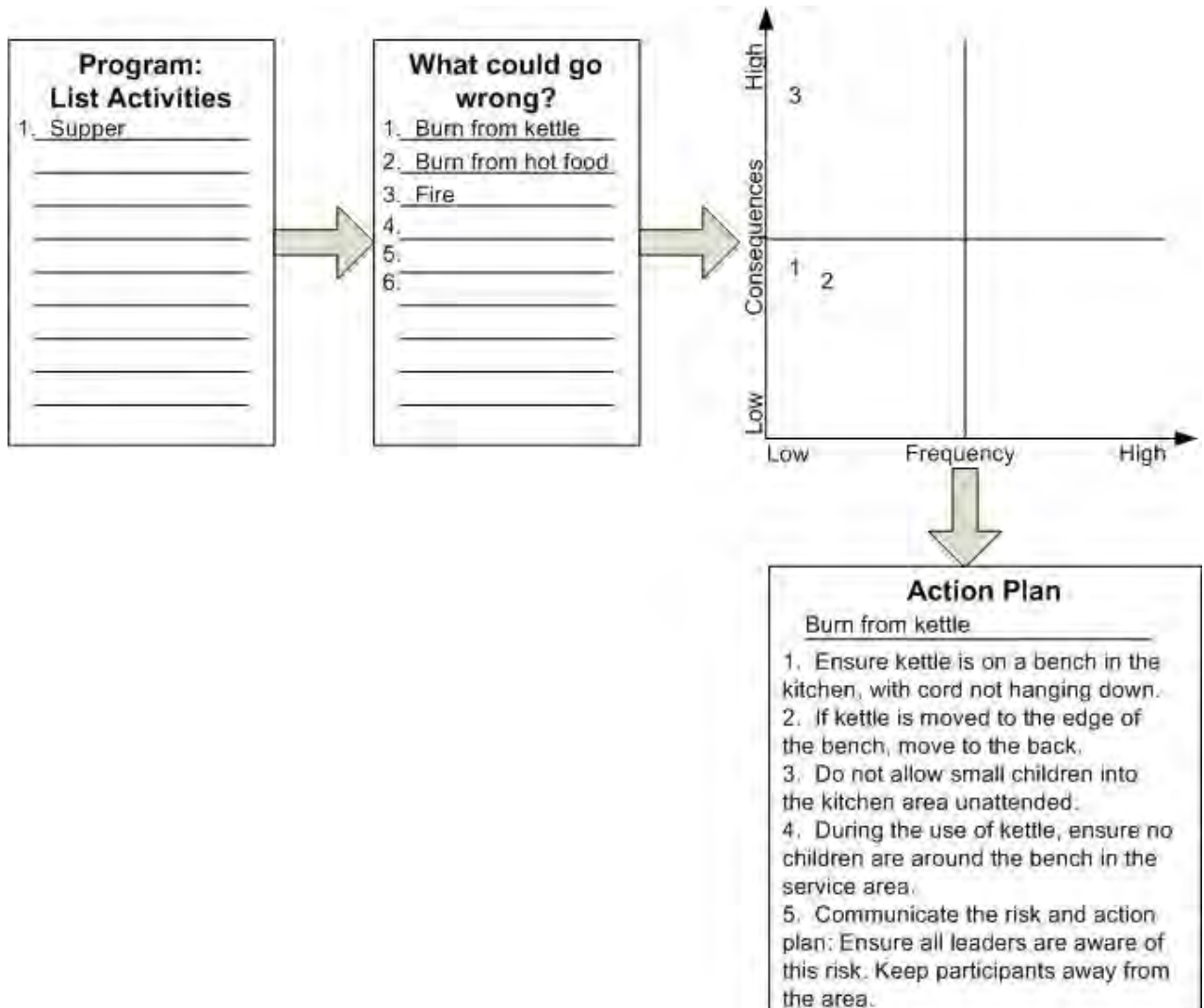
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b. Emotional and Spiritual Environments

To ensure that people are safe, the physical environment is only part of what must be considered. In **Chapter 1** we discussed the gift of boundaries. This includes people's emotions and spiritual development. In fact, many more people leave the church due to a feeling or perception that their emotional and/or spiritual boundaries have been violated, (harm done to them intentionally or unintentionally), rather than a physical injury.

Ensuring safe emotional and spiritual environments is fundamentally about putting other people's needs above our own agenda to ensure that a program runs successfully, respecting personhood, i.e. valuing individuals, their backgrounds, their personality, their hopes, dreams and fears. It is about staying true to the good news message that Jesus came to bring life, not "putting heavy burdens onto people". It is fostering a welcoming and caring ministry space, where people feel safe to share their ideas without being ridiculed.

In this manual we have already considered ways to help people protect and care for themselves (see Chapter 2). These are all ways leaders can help establish safe emotional and spiritual environments. Additionally, consider the areas below in your planning and preparation for events and programs.

Servant Leadership: In Chapter 1 we explore the "How To's" of Safe Church ministry, i.e. the gift of boundaries, teams and duty of care. These foundations apply to the spiritual environment. In Chapter 2, spiritual abuse is listed as a type of abuse, and being committed to the good news (gospel) is a sure way of protecting against spiritual abuse (see pages 28-29).

A non-abusive spiritual environment is one where no one is manipulated, or coerced. A safe spiritual environment is a space where people are free to experience a full life in Jesus (John 10:10), a place where people can explore the good news (gospel) of God in Jesus and grow in their relationship with God and others. Jesus said to his disciples that they were not to be like the leaders of this world who lord it over others, but rather to serve, *"just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* Matthew 20:25-28. This may be called servant leadership, and is the way in which non-abusive Christian leaders carry out their positions of trust and power. Jesus' ransom for us is good news. In Jesus we find forgiveness, love, healing, and restoration. As leaders we need to be about serving others - being servants like Christ served (Philippians 2:1-8).

Handling Private Information (National Privacy Act): Obtaining information about people is essential if we are to be equipped to care for them, not only physically but also emotionally. We need to respect people's information especially in critical situations, emergencies and with guardianship issues.

Where appropriate, dependent upon the age and vulnerabilities of participants, obtain the person's name and a contact phone number. When it is apparent that the person is going to be coming fairly regularly, it may be necessary to obtain significant other information (p. 74-75).

Please consider the principles in the National Privacy Act. i.e. that private information is only collected if necessary; individuals concerned are advised of its intended use; personal information collected is stored securely and not divulged to others without the consent of the individual involved; any personal information the Church is holding which is no longer required, is out of date or incorrect is either destroyed or amended to be accurate.

Responding To The Needs Of An Individual: When sharing in ministry our starting point should be, "How can I serve you?" It is important not to predetermine how much physical contact, or how many words, bible verses, or 'your solutions' you need to provide a person with. Ministry to the person is not based on the need of the leader to provide comfort. Ask a person what they need from you, e.g. "Would you like me to pray for you?" Touch, counsel, and emotional support is provided for the other person's wellbeing, not for your own ego or to meet your emotional needs.

Respect diversity: People may come to church programs with a variety of cultural norms and expectations. We need to be aware of the expectations and taboos that may exist for people in the cultural settings in which we minister. Consider whether an activity may cause a problem culturally for those involved. If you suspect an activity could be a problem, ask the program participant or their family prior to asking them to take part.

Value the different cultural traditions and heritages of Australian indigenous and other cultural groups in our churches when it comes to matters of child-raising and parenting. For those ministering in such settings, it is essential to take special care in ensuring that the principles found in this policy document are followed.

The power of the role model: The behaviour of leaders is observed at all times by the people who follow. Followers are quick to discern inconsistency between words and actions, and credibility can be lost if they perceive inconsistencies. In terms of children, they will model the behaviours that are being modelled by the people who are influential in their lives. If a child admires a leader, then they are likely to imitate the behaviours of that leader.   As leaders if we are discouraging, unreasonably punitive, disaffirming, disrespectful or sarcastic, this is what we are modelling. It can become a case of a leader "reaping what they have sowed".

The power of words: Since words as well as actions can be misinterpreted, it is wise for leaders to think about what impact their words have. Leaders have a responsibility to ensure that their conversations are not abusive or offensive within the normal range of these terms. People will from time to time take offence at what we say, but our responsibility is not to be offensive or derogatory in our conversation with others. A general principle to be embraced by all leaders is to consider the impact of their words and actions before they speak or act.

Be private in a public setting: If it is necessary to speak with a program participant privately, it is wise to inform your team leader of another member of your team of the intention to do so. This removes the risk of supposition by others looking on that anything inappropriate could be happening. When speaking with a program participant individually, do so *privately in a public setting.* That is, move a few metres away from the rest of the group, but stay within the view of all the group. This allows a leader to have a private conversation without others hearing what is being discussed.

Non-verbal communication: Non-verbal communication refers to all methods or channels of communication which do not use of words. It includes body language, physical characteristics and appearance, the distance one person stands from another, physical environment and the use of time. The use of all of these categories of non-verbal communication sends powerful messages to others.

A general understanding of the impact of distance and personal space is also useful for leaders. Most people need a certain degree of space between them and others. In most cases people can cope with others invading their personal space from the side. However, most do not tolerate invasion either in front or behind.

It is useful for leaders to consider the distances they stand or sit from the people they are leading and determine if they may be making a person uncomfortable, because they are operating within an inappropriate space for a task.

Reflection: Emotional and Spiritual Environments
How might these principles impact your ministry?
How could you implement each of these principles?

c. Physical Environments

Providing safe physical environments is important if attendees are to participate freely in activities. To ensure that both leaders and ministry program participants are kept as safe as reasonably practicable consider completing a risk assessment and action plan for your ministry program, as suggested in the approval for ministry (Permission to Proceed) process.

Completing an annual approval for ministry process (see *Permission to Proceed* p. 71) will provide transparency and accountability to the congregation and community in terms of a written risk assessment of your program or ministry event annually.

Consider the following areas:

To assist with the implementation of an approval for ministry process we have included discussion of several common areas of the physical environment which require special attention. Recommendations have been provided for each area.

c.i.   Work Health & Safety

A national Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (WHS) has been effective in most states since 1st January 2012. For the purposes of the Act, anyone who is carrying out work on behalf of the church will be deemed as a worker. This includes employees, leaders, volunteers, contractors, sub-contractors, work-experiencers, or trainees – anyone doing any form of work, or ministry, on behalf of the church. This was updated in WA as part of the WHS Act (2020).

We recommend that churches consider the principles contained within the Act, and take seriously the church's responsibility to do all that is reasonably practicable to ensure the physical and psychological health and safety of all workers, including volunteers. Those attending churches also have responsibilities to follow safety rules and report hazards.

To meet the requirements of the new Act the following ideas may be helpful for local leadership teams:

1. Appointment of a Safety Officer/Team for the church
2. Write and implement WHS policies, including privacy policy and evacuations procedures
3. Keep WHS on the agenda at Senior Leadership team meetings (have a report from Safety team)
4. Display a permanent poster in your church building explaining that any church health and safety concerns are to be communicated to the (insert names of the Safety Team members).
5. Use the Church Newsletter as a source of information on a regular basis reminding people that if they have any church health and safety concerns, they are to be reported to the Church Safety Officer/Team either in person or in writing.
6. Report incidents such as serious events and dangerous incidents within a prescribed period.
7. Safety Team to undertake a safe environment audit of the church centre at least twice a year. Use hierarchy of control measures to address any hazards. The audit should also include consulting with ministry leaders regarding church health and safety issues.
8. Address health and safety concerns within one month of the concern being communicated to the Church Safety Officer/Team.
9. Make senior church leaders and ministry co-ordinators aware of the information on support in ministry which is addressed in your Safe Church program.
10. Use accident/incident report documentation provided by the denomination to report serious incidents.
11. Ensure all workers know and follow your church abuse reporting and grievance processes (See Chapter 2 pages 31-36).

For more information, contact the Baptist Ministry Centre on 08 6313 6300. Latest WHS news can be viewed at www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe or call 1300 307 877.

c.ii. First Aid

First aid is the emergency care of injured or sick persons. It aims to preserve life, promote recovery, and prevent the injury or illness becoming worse. Guidance notes are available in most states from WorkCover authorities. First aid requirements vary from state to state. All churches should have an accessible first aid kit. A record should be kept of any treatment given. The name of your trained first aider should be displayed on the front of the cabinet. Analgesics should not form part of your first aid kit. (OH & S Made Easy, 2003)

Recommended First Aid Procedure
- At least one on-site leader or adult should have current first aid training, e.g. St John Ambulance.
- A suitable, up-to-date and accessible first aid kit is to be available at all times.

c.iii. Transportation

Negligent driving can have painful emotional and legal consequences. Anyone who cannot/does not drive responsibly must not transport program attendees. Vehicles need to be driven carefully, observing the legal speed limits and road laws.

Recommended Transportation Procedure
- Responsible transportation is to be provided (road rule-abiding).
- Never be alone in a car with a child or vulnerable person.
- At no time should there be more passengers in a car than the number of seat belts that are in working order and available for use.
- All cars will be registered, insured, in good working order and driven by licensed drivers.
- If a child/young person is travelling in a vehicle driven by a worker who possesses a provisional licence, prior written consent should, wherever possible, be given by a parent/guardian, except in the case of emergencies.

c.iv. Food

If your church provides food as part of the programs you provide, you will need to appoint people to be responsible for its implementation. Nearly all food naturally contains bacteria, and sometimes these bacteria can cause food poisoning. Food has to be handled correctly to make sure that it doesn't become contaminated, and that the bacteria in it doesn't have opportunity to grow.

Recommended Food Handling Procedure
- Use the Food Preparation and Storage Practices Guide (See page 73).
- Place a copy of your Food Preparation and Storage Practices Guide in your kitchen or food preparation area.
- Check with your local council to ensure you are meeting local requirements in relation to food handling.

If you are selling food, it may be necessary to obtain a licence from your local council.

c.v. Supervision (Particularly With Children and Vulnerable Adults)

To properly exercise our duty of care it is essential that we not only have the right kind of leader, but that we also have adequate numbers to supervise the program, especially with children and vulnerable adults.

Precise numbers of leaders are hard to determine and will depend greatly on the size of the group, their age and the risk level of physical or emotional risk inherent in the activity. Programs aimed at younger children, disabled and/or vulnerable adults require more supervision due to the increased level of risk involved.

No matter what size the group is, you will need enough leaders to cope with any accidents and/or critical incidents that may occur.

A good guide is a minimum of 2 adult leaders on site for all programs, and then a ratio of 1:10.

This will allow for safe supervision if and when accidents or critical incidents occur. Of course, you will need many more leaders if you are planning to run high-risk activities such as taking children or young people off-site, swimming, bushwalks, games nights or the like, or if your group is large.

Recommended Supervision Procedure
- Make the distinction between those adults who are part of the team and junior ministry leaders (under 18 years). Junior ministry leaders (under 18 years) are not to be counted as supervisors for ratio numbers, but instead must be included in the number of those needing supervision..
- Use adult helpers. Adult helpers are people over the age of 18 who are not leaders of the group, but rather are present on-site for supervision purposes. Adult helpers do not actually run activities, whereas junior ministry leaders may run many. Adult helpers are important to help ensure the safety of the children and/or young people.
- No leader should be alone, one-on-one, with a child or young person. One adult with a small group is fine as long as there are other adults on site.
- When toileting very young children (under 5), the best practice is to have the parent come and toilet their child. If this is not possible, take children in a group to the toilet.
- Where possible, child/young person programs should have both male and female leaders to provide support for both boys and girls.
- In relation to camps or overnight setting, consideration must be given to the sleeping arrangements for leaders and children. There are risks to children sleeping in a room together without adult supervision, as well as risk with adults sleeping in the same quarters. A risk assessment should be made that includes the risk to children if left without adult supervision overnight. If leaders are required to provide supervision overnight and will be sleeping in the same rooms as children, the leaders should be designated a leader's space (cabin) nearby for changing, personal space and belongings.
- For safe supervision of children/young people, have adequate number of adult leaders in proportion to the risks of the program and number of attendees. Have a minimum of two adults in attendance, or on-site, whilst running ministry activities.

c.vi. Age Specific Issues (Related To Children & Young Persons)
All age groups have different needs.

Recommended Age Specific Procedure

- Ensure you provide age appropriate activities for your program participant (no matter what the age) and include them in the planning (i.e. foster their voice, Chapter 2).
- Depending on the age your ministry is aimed at consider using the following:
  An advertised program: Sent home to the parents/guardians for the coming term/semester. Where a change is unavoidable, parents should be notified.
  A registration table: This table is where children will come to register for the program each time.
  Sign in/out sheet: These can be useful for groups working with under 12-year-olds, to be signed by a recognised parent/guardian. Please note that when running programs or activities for under 18's, you are required to keep a record of those attending. This can be a sign in/out sheet, or you may choose to use an electronic check in system.
  Permission notes: For all off-site activities for under 18-year-olds.
- **A risk assessment checklist**: To assess the safety of a program or activity.

c.vii. Managing High Risk Activities

Some high risk injuries may be excluded from the church liability cover.

Recommended High Risk Activity Procedure
- For high risk and off-site activities: e.g. Water sports, swimming excursions, white water rafting/caving/bungy jumping, inflatable sumo suit wrestling, gladiator games, horse-riding, high ropes activities, roller blading/ skating, skateboarding or activities involving live animals, must have an employee/leader with appropriate (certified) training for the event.
- Active supervision is also required at all times. Supervisors must not be involved in any additional activities that will distract their role as a supervisor.
- All participants involved in high risk activities should have a signed liability release from their parent/guardian. However, it is important to note that a liability release form does not actually indemnify against an accident. An individual leader may be protected where all due care has been taken, but a church may still be deemed liable where duty of care failures are proven.
- Contact your Insurance Officer for advice before running high risk activities.

c.viii. Safe manual handling practices are in place

It is important that safe manual handling techniques are to be used when lifting or moving equipment or furniture.

Recommended Manual Handling Procedure
- Seek guidance on manual handling from WorkSafe: www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe.
- It is advisable that all leaders are to be briefed in safe lifting techniques annually.

c.viii. Safe visual and auditory practices are in place

It is important that safe visual and auditory care is provided for leaders and those attending programs as part of the church.

Recommended Visual and Auditory Procedure
Visual Care:
- Effective lighting is to be used during all church events
- Faulty lights are not to be used during church events
- Faulty light globes and fittings are to be brought to the notice of the Church Safety Officer and are to be replaced as soon as practicable

Auditory Care:
- Consideration is to be given to auditory comfort when setting volume levels of audio equipment
- Volume of audio equipment during church events is to be kept at 85 decibels or lower, or as deemed to be appropriate by the senior church leadership for a given situation. (Additional information on impact of noise may be found at http://www.hearing.com.au)
- Persons operating sound desk during church events are to be trained in providing safe auditory level

c.ix. Online Environments

Online environments are valuable tools for churches and their communities. They provide children and young people in particular with a range of opportunities to connect with the church community in new and interactive ways, to engage with others, and to seek help and information. It is important for churches to realise that when they provide online environments that ensure that where children and vulnerable people participate online they are protected from harm.

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations recognise the importance of safe physical and online environments to promote the safety and wellbeing of all vulnerable people. There should be clear guidelines and procedures in place to govern how a church and its volunteers use all electronic media and

online environments to ensure that the same care we put into creating safe spaces in our facilities is put into providing access to safe online environments also.

A checklist to assist with assessing the risk in this area, along with links to useful resources and materials regarding online environments, can be found at:

https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/inline-files/CSO%20Checklist%20for%20online%20safety_3.pdf

d. Responding to Accident and Incidents

While we all hope that they will never occur, people do have accidents and there are emergencies. At these times the health and safety of the person is of paramount concern and it may be necessary for a leader to administer first aid to a person.

A critical incident is an event or set of circumstances that have the potential to result in physical or psychological outcomes ranging from mild trauma to a fatality for one or more people. A Critical Incident Response Plan should be accessible from your Church Safety Team.

A Critical Incident Response Plan is a systematic approach to planning and implementing an immediate and long-term response to a critical incident. It has 3 main stages: Preparedness, Response and Recovery.

We also recommend that injuries or accidents which require secondary medical attention e.g. visit to a doctor or medical centre, be written up on an Accident/Complaint Report (see page 67). Accidents of a serious nature need to be reported to your denominational insurance company. It is necessary that all serious incidents be reported to the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety. Contact details for the Department can be found on their website. We also recommend that you advise BCWA as soon as is practicable. Also report all incidents to parents and/or care-givers of children and vulnerable adults.

Commitment 4
Risk Management

BCWA recommend that you make the following commitment:

- We will manage emotional and physical risks associated with all church ministry programs and events as outlined in the BCWA Risk Management and Safety Guidelines.

- Program or event team leaders complete an Approval for Ministry process for their event of program before it begins each year or each time, in the case of short term or one off events.

- We will appoint a Safety Team from senior church leadership to oversee the implementation of the Safe Church Policy.

Policies & Templates

The following Policies and Templates are recommended by BCWA for Baptist Churches within Western Australia:

- Safe Church Policy
- Code of Good Leadership Practices
- Risk Management & Safe Environment Guidelines
- Individual Accountability & Safety Agreements
- Anecdotal Record (Red Flags)
- Incident Report: Risk of Harm.
- Application for Safe Churches Leadership
- Permission to Proceed
- Accident/Complaint Report
- Food Safety Guidelines
- Participant Registration Form
- Approved Driver Application

Baptist Churches in Western Australia can request a copy of the BCWA Safe Church Implementation Manual. The manual provides some helpful information regarding the implementation of policies, procedures and guidelines to support Safe Church in local Baptist churches. The Implementation manual includes suggested flowcharts and templates and is available by request. Please contact BCWA Ministry Centre for further information.

Helpful Definitions

Safe Environment: where duty of care is discharged by taking steps to keep all those in our care safe e.g. from spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional abuse (including bullying) or neglect.

The Safety Team: also known as risk management team, is responsible for the oversight of the implementation of the Safe Church Policy and supporting documentation and processes in local churches/organisations.

Permission to Proceed: written process of accountability, whereby a Ministry Co-ordinator reviews safety plans for a program and grants permission for that program to proceed under the church/organisation's name.

Safe Leader: has been through a recruitment process, understands responsibilities, is supervised and is an accountable team player.

Safe Program: all risks have been assessed and events thought through and planned. These programs have had permission to proceed from ministry co-ordinator (a role that may be undertaken by pastors, elders, deacons or other senior leaders).

Team Leaders: responsible for individual teams and programs. They jointly recruit team members and complete safety management plans for their individual programs.

Team Members: responsible for working within their team to minister in the context of programs.

SCTA: Safe Church Training Agreement under the National Council of Churches in Australia.

The Safe Church Policy applies to all pastors, elders, staff members and volunteer workers associated with the ministry in our family of churches (BCWA). The Safe Church Policy takes into account The Child and Community Services Act 2004.

More Information

The Safe Church Policy is supported by:

• Safe Church National Training System
• Safe Church Training Workbook for BCWA
• Code of Good Leadership Practices
• Risk Management & Safe Environment Guidelines
• Safe Church Implementation Guide
• Protecting People, Protecting Property: Risk Management Manual for Churches

Contact Information:

BCWA
08 6313 6300 | www.baptistwa.asn.au
safechurch@baptistwa.asn.au

Department for Child Protection
08 9222 2555 | www.dcp.wa.gov.au

Department of Local Government & Communities
08 6551 8700 | www.dlgc.wa.gov.au

National Kids Help Line
1800 55 1800 | www.kidshelp.com.au

Life Line
131 114 | www.lifelinewa.org.au

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Safe Church
Training Agreement
TOWARDS SAFER CHURCHES

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Baptist Churches
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Safe Church Policy

July 2016

An initiative of
Baptist Churches Western Australia

Why a policy?

The Bible consistently expresses God's concern for the well-being of the weak and powerless members of society, children in particular. Christ's words and example provide a strong rationale for churches being responsible for all those in their care. Baptist Churches Western Australia (BCWA) takes this responsibility very seriously.

As those charged with leading and caring for others in ministry, we have a responsibility to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all under our care. All people have the right to be emotionally and physically safe, respected, and have their views and opinions valued at all times.

We also live in a country that legislates for people's safety, particularly in the area of child protection. This *Safe Church Policy* has been developed to help us live out our biblical mandate and our responsibilities under WA legislation.

Our *Safe Church Policy* has the following goals:

- To minimise the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of positional power within the church.

- To ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and ministry misconduct are handled in a consistent, unbiased and thorough manner.

- To ensure that leaders and programs are safe.

- To ensure that all people are respected and valued irrespective of their gender, age, country of origin, cultural heritage, socio-economic background or ability.

Safe Leaders

We commit to:

a) Safe recruitment of leaders

We will recruit using the *BCWA Application for Safe Churches Leadership*

We will screen all prospective leaders before they are appointed.

We will require all leaders in child-related ministry to also obtain a WA Working with Children Check.

We recommend a minimum 6 months church attendance policy for all prospective volunteer leaders.

b) Adequate training of leaders

We require that all leaders attend a Safe Church (or SCTA endorsed) workshop within their first year of ministry and to attend a refresher workshop every three years.

We require all leaders to attend additional ministry-specific departmental training as required by individual churches.

c) Continued supervision of leaders

We commit to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for leaders. We require all leaders to agree to follow the *Code of Good Leadership Practices*.

d) Responding to allegations of suspected abuse

We require all leaders to report disclosure or suspicions of child abuse, using the procedure in the *Safe Church Training Workbook for BCWA*.

Where a leader has an allegation of misconduct made against them, the *BCWA Response to Complaint protocols* will be followed.

Safe Programs

We commit to:

a) Safe emotional environments

We will give opportunity to all people, including children, to provide input into the programs and the activities in which they are to participate, by fostering and valuing their ideas, and encouraging participation in all areas of the life of the church, as far as is sensible and practical.

We will endeavour to obtain information relating to the program participants, including children's information to help meet their physical and emotional needs.

We will require those in ministry leadership to be nurturing and affirming in their ministry interactions.

b) Safe physical environments

We require all leaders to establish safe physical environments as outlined in the *Safe Church Training Workbook for BCWA.*

We require Team Leaders to exercise a duty of care through the use of forms, checklists and templates made available through the *Safe Church Implementation Guide* for establishment and maintenance of safe ministry environments.

We require a Safety Team to be appointed in each congregation or organisation to ensure that the following areas are incorporated into establishing and maintaining a safe physical environment: fire safety; venue safety; first aid; food safety practices; risk assessment for activities; adequate ministry supervision for activities; transport protocols; critical incident and emergency protocols and ministry review.

We require Team leaders to complete a Permission to Proceed process annually.

- Applying appropriate standards of dress as a model to others
- Exercising integrity and accountability in financial matters on behalf of BCWA and in personal dealings
- Exercising integrity in the use of media, printbased materials and intellectual property
- Treating all personal information with sensitivity and confidentiality, in accordance with the Church Privacy Policy and the National Privacy Principles

When the Code is damaged

Occasional/minor violations

Everyone sins and can be forgiven (1 John 1:8-9). 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 about receiving help. In some cases it may be necessary to step the person aside from their duties whilst this takes place. Deal with such matters confidentially.

Unknown violations

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 not to discredit the gospel. As above, stepping a person aside from their duties may be necessary.

Constant violations

There are breaches that are not a breach of civil or criminal law. When a leader is made aware of their behaviour and yet refuses to change:

i. The ministry coordinator meets with the person for a series of behaviour review meetings and communicates behavioural changes that are required.

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

iii. If the behaviour 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 counseling if they are willing. NB: Written notes of all meetings to be carefully taken and a copy given to all attendees.

Breaches of the law or allegations of abuse

Allegations of abuse or serious misconduct are to be referred to BCWA. If a leader or minister commits a crime, please contact the Baptist Ministry Centre on 6313 6300.

Contact Information:

BCWA

08 6313 6300 | www.baptistwa.asn.au
safechurch@baptistwa.asn.au

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Safe Church Training Agreement
TOWARDS SAFER CHURCHES

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Baptist Churches WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Code of Good Leadership Practices

July 2016

An initiative of
Baptist Churches Western Australia

Code of Good Leadership Practices

Through His word God directs us to live out our ministry roles with integrity, enthusiasm, compassion and patience.

(2 Cor 6:3, 2 Tim 4:2, 2 Tim 4:5, Eph 2:10).

A Code of Good Leadership Practices

provides guidelines on appropriate boundaries rather than assuming that people know what the appropriate boundaries are.

The five key sections following provide an overview of what Baptist Churches Western Australia (BCWA) expects of those in leadership, as they exercise their ministry and in their personal lives.

It also provides a step by step procedure for loving leaders through a healing process when they break or damage the code. This code is not a set of laws to be added to grace, but rather, expressions of our love towards each other and the people to whom and with whom we minister.

Maintain a healthy relationship with God

We minister to others out of our relationship with God. We can promote our 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 our gratitude to God

Be diligent in exercising ministry

If you are exercising a pastoral ministry in a church body you are encouraged to:

- Take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and welfare of those in your care

- Respect, listen to and attempt to meet individual needs
- Give careful consideration to the choice of activities, ensuring adequate supervision and age, gender, ability and cultural appropriateness
- Ensure that in the case of ministry programs to those under 18 years, there are sufficient adults (18 years and over) present for the adequate supervision of ministry activities, i.e. minimum of one adult leader to ten children and minimum of two adults and one of each gender for mixed groups.
- Ensure that Junior Team members, who are under 18 years will not be given sole responsibility to supervise other minors and are to be under the supervision of adults in the same general proximity
- Be welcoming and affirming of others as individuals who are precious in God's sight, avoiding any appearance of favouritism, or 'special' relationships with those under your care
- Provide clear behavioural expectations for those under your care and refrain from any form of corporal punishment
- Ensure that the content of any printed, media, music or digital material to be used is suitable and appropriate to the age and maturity of the group being taught or entertained

Be accountable and transparent in interactions

As leaders of integrity we hold ourselves accountable to each other and recognise that we are responsible for our words and actions and how they might impact others. Part of our desire to be accountable relates to utilising transparent practices in our ministry to others. We are to be seen to be doing the right thing and are responsible for our actions. In our interactions with children it is recommended that:

- You avoid working alone or in isolation
- Individual or small group ministry occurs in the presence of adults, a public place or a location with visibility
- Counseling to children or young people should be performed in the presence of two responsible adults or leaders
- To the extent practicable, avoid being alone with a child in a motor vehicle

Exercise appropriate physical contact

Appropriate physical contact is important for the healthy development of children. In general:

- Excluding circumstances such as immediate physical danger or medical emergency, physical contact should be initiated by the child
- Ensure that physical contact is of a nonsexual nature
- Great care should be exercised when comforting a distressed person of any age

Minister with integrity

The personal behaviour and relationships of all in leadership has a significant impact on the church and the community because they are a model to others. As you consider your impact on others, be mindful of:

- Loving and caring for your family and paying particular attention to the effect of your ministry on your family relationships
- Displaying behaviours and attitudes that are above reproach when interacting with others
- Being sensitive and respectful towards family and cultural traditions different from your own
- Avoiding language that may be misunderstood or that bullies, threatens, belittles, humiliates or causes unnecessary offence or embarrassment
- Exercising discretion and appropriateness when considering, viewing or using restricted material

What is risk management?

Risk management is the process of managing your organisation's exposure to potential risks and actual hazards.

Where risk assessment considers things that might be a risk or could go wrong, hazard identification and control measures relate to actual hazards that are present. In risk management, risks are identified and assessed (Risk Register) in order to prevent them or reduce them, and by providing funds to meet any liability if it occurs.

What is a risk register?

A risk register is one way of documenting risks that have been identified, control measures that are in place to address risks and level of risk assessed.

What is a risk action plan?

A risk action plan is used to describe what additional measures you will use to reduce, eradicate or manage potential risks identified in your risk register for your organisation. It also includes information on resources required (people, equipment, financial), lines of responsibility and timeline for implementation.

What is a church safety officer?

A church safety officer/team is responsible for:

- Liaising with Team Leaders to ensure that all aspects of risk identification, assessment and management are implemented in a church or organisation

- Providing information on safe work practices

- Keeping records of all documentation pertaining to incidents related to risk or hazards associated with church or organisation premises and activities

- Keeping senior church or organisation leadership informed of risk management status

What is a safety team?

This team, also known as risk management team, is responsible for the oversight of the implementation of the Safe Church Policy and supporting documentation and processes in local churches/organisations.

These Risk Management & Safe Environment Guidelines apply to all pastors, elders, staff members and volunteer workers associated with ministry in our family of churches (BCWA).

More Information – The *Risk Management & Safe Environment Guidelines* are supported by:

- *Safe Church National Training System*
- *Safe Church Training Workbook for BCWA*
- *Safe Church Implementation Guide*
- *Australian Baptist Ministries Response to Persons of Concern*
- *Baptist Insurance Services Risk Management Guide for Churches*

Contact Information

BCWA

08 6313 6300 | www.baptistwa.asn.au
safechurch@baptistwa.asn.au

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Risk Management & Safe Environment Guidelines

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Baptist Churches
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Risk Management and Safe Environment Guidelines

BCWA have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for their workers and to protect other people's property from damage.

BCWA also recognises the obligation it has to those who enter BCWA premises and participate in the activities provided, and those who come under its care in an external environment.

This document is underpinned by the following policy statements from the BCWA Safe Church Policy:

- We will give opportunity to all people, including children, to provide input into the programs and the activities in which they are to participate, by fostering and valuing their ideas, and encouraging participation in all areas of the life of the church, as far as is sensible and practical.
- We will obtain information relating to the program participants, including children's health and family situation, to ensure that we are able to care for their physical and emotional needs.
- We require all leaders to establish safe physical environments as outlined in the *Safe Church Training Workbook* for BCWA.
- We require Team Leaders to exercise a duty of care through the use of forms, checklists and templates made available through the *Safe Church Implementation Guide* for establishment and maintenance of safe ministry environments.
- We require a Safety Team to be appointed in each congregation or organisation to ensure that the following areas are incorporated into establishing and maintaining a safe physical environment: fire safety; venue safety; first aid; food safety practices; risk assessment for activities; adequate ministry supervision for activities; transport protocols; critical incident and emergency protocols and ministry review.
- We require Team leaders to complete a Permission to Proceed process annually.

In order to fulfill our responsibilities BCWA expects all churches draw upon the resources located in: *Safe Church Training Workbook for BCWA, Safe Church Implementation Guide, Safe Church National Training System and Baptist Insurance Services Risk Management Guide for Churches to:*

1. Provide a safe and secure environment
2. Conduct risk assessment
3. Manage risk

1. Provide a safe and secure environment

In providing a safe and secure environment ensure that:

- Appropriate first aid equipment and personnel are in place for activities
- Safe food handling and hygiene practices are employed
- Safe manual handling, lifting and moving techniques are encouraged
- Information on safe handling of hazardous substances is provided
- Safe visual and auditory care is provided for workers and those attending programs as part of the church
- On-site and off-site venue hazards are identified and effective control measures are implemented
- Those undertaking off-site activities (eg. home groups, etc) are encouraged to consider aspects of establishing a safe environment
- Applying emergency procedures including emergency evacuations, use of fire extinguishers and Critical Incident Response Plan
- Buildings are maintained in a state of good repair
- Security measures are employed to ensure people and property security

2. Conduct risk assessment

In conducting risk assessments of the environment where work and activities are conducted and will, as far as is reasonably practicable, eliminate or work to manage the identified risks using the following strategies:

- Risks in premises and ministry program activities are identified
- Risk registers to assess risks are completed
- Risk action plans are developed and implemented
- Risk action plans are monitored

3. Manage risk

In developing and implementing risk management/ maintenance plans, ensure that:

- A Church Safety Officer is appointed
- Areas of risk are identified and managed
- All incidents, areas of potential risk and actual hazards are reported to the Church Safety Officer, using appropriate documentation

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

What is risk?

Risk is the exposure to the possibility of such things as physical damage, injury or delay, economic or financial loss or gain, as a consequence of pursuing or not pursuing a particular course of action. The concept of risk includes:

- The perception that something could happen
- The likelihood of it occurring
- The consequences if it does occur

What is a hazard?

A hazard is an actual source of danger that could result in an accident if undue care is not exercised.

When to use this process?

If a person in your church, or a person interested in coming to your church:

- tells you that they have committed a sexual offence

- in the course of doing your due diligence checks for recruitment, a person discloses they have committed a past sexual offence

- if you are aware that a person has had an allegation of a past or current sexual offence

- deemed to be a risk to the safety of children and/or vulnerable adults because of an adverse risk

Is this a Christian Response?

A Christian congregation can be one of the few places where sexual abusers, as the recipients of God's forgiveness, can mix with a Christian community. However, that forgiveness does not mean immunity from temptation to re-offend.

The forgiveness and grace of God, mediated with supervision and clear guidelines through a local church, can be a vital part of that journey.

This demonstrates the Australian Baptist Churches' mission and commitment to provide a safe place for children and other vulnerable people to grow and shine.

Who should we contact?

Your Professional Standards or Safe Church Liaison person:

Baptist Churches of South Australia

08 8357 1755

Baptist Union of Victoria & Baptist

Churches of Tasmania

03 9880 6100

Queensland Baptists

07 3354 5600

Baptist Churches Western Australia

08 6313 6300

Baptist Churches NSW & ACT

02 9868 9200

Adapted from *the Anglican Church of Australia – Professional Standards Commission "Guidelines for parish safety where there is a risk of sexual abuse by a person of concern"*, 2010).

An Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern

Australian **BAPTIST** MINISTRIES

Individual Accountability & Safety Agreements
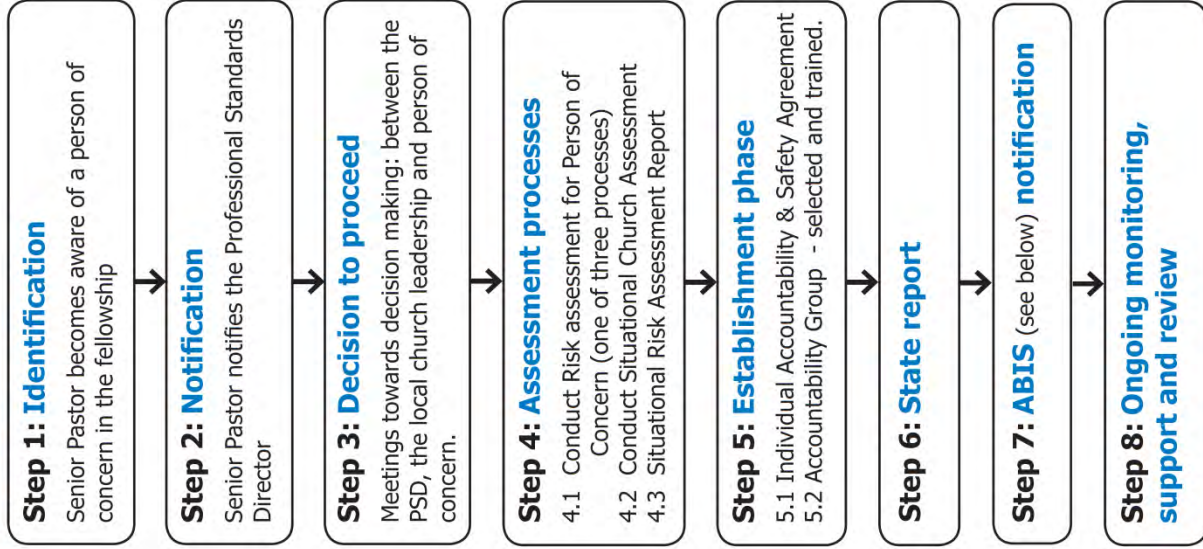
Why do we need a process?

From time to time you may face the situation where a person of concern has been worshipping and been involved, or wishes to worship and be involved, in your church. While demonstrating genuine compassion and justice, you must take steps to protect the whole church community.

This process aims to ensure that all reasonable measures have been put in place to ensure *safe ministry* occurs with persons of concern. Australian Baptists are committed to *safe ministry*, i.e. God honouring, abuse free, harm free, person valuing and respectful ministry.

Ministry to a person of concern acknowledges:

- that there is a high level of community feeling and fear about sexual abuse.

- the duty of care we have to provide safe environments for all people in our churches.

- that there is no one type of person of concern, therefore individual Safety Agreements are necessary.

- that there are survivors of abuse in congregations, and we seek to care for them effectively.

- the issues of forgiveness and a person of concern's right to privacy.

- the liability issues around a person of concern reoffending.

- the need for denominational support, training, monitoring and oversight in this process.

Flowchart

Step 1: Identification
Senior Pastor becomes aware of a person of concern in the fellowship

Step 2: Notification
Senior Pastor notifies the Professional Standards Director

Step 3: Decision to proceed
Meetings towards decision making: between the PSD, the local church leadership and person of concern.

Step 4: Assessment processes
4.1 Conduct Risk assessment for Person of Concern (one of three processes)
4.2 Conduct Situational Church Assessment
4.3 Situational Risk Assessment Report

Step 5: Establishment phase
5.1 Individual Accountability & Safety Agreement
5.2 Accountability Group - selected and trained.

Step 6: State report

Step 7: ABIS (see below) **notification**

Step 8: Ongoing monitoring, support and review

ABIS = Australian Baptist Insurance Scheme

Who are persons of concern (POC)?

A person of concern:

1. has pleaded guilty to, been convicted of, or has admitted to a sexual criminal offence.

2. has been found to have sexually offended, arising through due diligence checks related to recruitment (screening).

3. is currently charged with a sexual offence.

4. has been the subject of an allegation of a sexual offence and this was not appropriately investigated.

5. has been found to have received an adverse risk assessment arising from sexual misconduct

6. deemed to be a risk to the safety of children and/or vulnerable adults because of an adverse risk assessment relating to sexual misconduct.

7. exhibits constant wandering across other peoples' sexual boundaries.

What does an Individual Accountability & Safety Agreement Mean?

An individual safety agreement is an agreement between a person of concern, the local church and denomination, establishing the terms and conditions for the person of concern to participate in the life of the church.

A Safety Agreement makes clear what steps the church and person of concern are taking to reduce real and potential risks associated with ministry to the person of concern.

Baptist Churches WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Safe Churches

Anecdotal Record

To be completed by a leader who wishes to report concerns about another person, either relating to the code of conduct; or concerning behaviour, either in a leader or program participant. This includes raising concerns of abuse. The completed form should be given to the team leader, who will pass the information onto the Safe Church Response Officer, and then kept in a secure location.

Name of person filling in this report	
Name of Team Leader	
Name of child/young person	
Age of child/young person	
Relationship to the child	
Date and time of incident or observation	
Describe your concerns, what was observed or what was said.	

Note: It is important to provide as much information as possible, basing your information on facts and observations, without making assumptions; jumping to conclusions, or making 'value' judgments.

Signature		Date/Time	

Please return the completed form (marked CONFIDENTIAL) to your Team Leader.

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Safe Churches

PLEASE ENTER NAME OF CHURCH OR ORGANISATION

Incident Report: Risk of Harm

To be completed by the person who hears a disclosure or wishes to report a child or young person at risk of harm. The completed form should be given only to the Safe Church Reporting Officer, and then kept in a secure location. The information will be used for reporting to the appropriate authorities, including the Department Child Protection.

PART A

Name of person filling in this report (Reporter)	
Relationship to the alleged victim:	
Name of Safe Church Response Officer:	
Nature of alleged abuse:	☐ physical ☐ emotional ☐ sexual ☐ neglect ☐ witness to domestic violence
This report is due to:	☐ reasonable grounds ☐ disclosure made on: Date / time:
Describe why you have reasonable grounds for this report (add pages if needed). Include when and how you became aware of the information; names of other witnesses; description of any injuries; description of the behaviour of the child or young person; the carer's attitude regarding the incident (if known).	
Where disclosure has occurred provide a first person verbatim in this space. Record the child or young person's actual words as best as you can.	

Signature		Date/Time

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Continued over...

PART B

Details of alleged abuse victim

Name:	Age:	☐ Male ☐ Female
Address:		
Parent/Guardian:	Phone:	
Names of siblings:		
Have the parents/guardians of the alleged victim been notified?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
If yes, person(s) spoken to:	Date/Time:	
What were they told:		

Details of alleged perpetrator of the abuse (if known)

Name:	Age:	☐ Male ☐ Female
Address:		
Phone:		
Does the alleged perpetrator know about the report?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
If yes, who spoke to him/her:	Date/Time:	
What was he/she told:		

Church's response to alleged abuse/risk of harm

Safe Church Response Officer (SCRO) advised?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Reported to SCRO by:	Date/Time:	
Statutory Body/Department Child Protection?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Name of call centre worker:	Ref #:	
Have the police been notified?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Reported to police by:	Date/Time:	
Name of Officer and Station:		
Advice given by police officer:		

Report submitted by:		Position in Church:
Signature		Date

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APPLICATION FOR SAFE CHURCHES LEADERSHIP

This application form shall be completed by all applicants for any leadership position (voluntary or paid), to be appointed by or on behalf of the Church.

Surname	Other Names	Previous names	Male/Female

Mobile Phone	Home Phone	Email

Address

Date of Birth	Normal Occupation	Marital Status

Working with Children Card/ Receipt No.		**Note**: Please attach a photocopy of Working with Children Check card.
National Police Check/ Receipt No.		**Note**: Please attach a photocopy of your National Police Certificate & have original sighted by Church.
Name of Church or Organisation applying to work for		
Area of ministry or activity for which this application is made		

Describe your personal, ministry & work experiences, including age groups and any work with children.

Character Referees:

Please provide details of at least three adults who can give a first-hand character reference concerning you, preferably within a recent area of ministry. **Include at least one person from your current Church, one from your family and one from a different area of ministry.** If this is not possible, other referees may be used.

Name of Referee 1 - Local Church				
Phone contacts	Home		Mobile	
Church or Ministry Organisation Please indicate the name of Church or Organisation within which the Referee has known you				
Applicant's Ministry Involvement Details of the role fulfilled by you, and your ministry relationship with the Referee				
Approximate Dates of Involvement	Start Date		End Date	
Name of Referee 2 - Family Member				
Phone contacts	Home		Mobile	
Relationship Your family relationship with the Referee				
Name of Referee 3				
Phone contacts	Home		Mobile	
Church or Ministry Organisation Please indicate the name of Church or Organisation within which the Referee has known you				
Applicant's Ministry Involvement Details of the role fulfilled by you, and your ministry relationship with the Referee				
Approximate Dates of Involvement	Start Date		End Date	

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Please tick "yes" or "no" for each question below. *NOTE: If the answer to any of the following is "yes", please give further details **on a separate page**. A "yes" answer will not automatically rule an applicant out of selection.*	Yes	No
1. Do you have any health problem(s) which may affect you volunteering for the church?		
2. Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence?		
3. Have you ever been charged with a criminal offence?		
4. Have you ever had permission to undertake paid or voluntary work with children or other vulnerable people refused, suspended or withdrawn in Australia or any other country?		
5. Have you ever engaged in any of the following conduct, even though never having been charged? • Sexual contact with someone under your care other than your spouse (such as a parishioner, client, patient, student, employee or subordinate) • Sexual contact with a person under the age of consent • Illegal use , production, sale or distribution of pornographic materials • Conduct likely to cause harm to people, or to put them at risk of harm.		
6. Has your driver's licence ever been revoked or suspended?		
7. Have you ever had an apprehended violence order, order for protection or the like issued against you as a result of allegations of violence, abuse, likely harm, harassment, stalking etc?		
8. Has a child or dependent young person in your care (as a parent or in any other capacity) ever been removed from your care, or been the subject of a risk assessment by the authorities?		
9. Have you done anything in the past or present that may result in allegations being made against you of child abuse? Abuse means: bullying; emotional abuse; harassment; neglect; physical abuse; or sexual abuse.		
10. Have you ever done anything in the past or present that may result in allegations being made against you of bullying or any form of harassment of adults?		
11. To your knowledge, have you ever been the subject of an allegation of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct?		
12. Do you have a history of alcohol or substance abuse or have you experienced difficulties with addiction? (including prescription, over-the-counter, recreational or illegal drugs, pornography)		
13. Is there any other relevant information or matter you think we should know about?		

Applicant's Statement

The information contained in this application is true to the best of my knowledge. I authorize the referees listed in this application, and any other relevant persons, to give the Church any information they may have regarding my character and fitness for ministry. I agree that the Church may contact people other than my referees, who know me, to assist in forming an opinion regarding my suitability.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to perform my services on behalf of the Church in a manner consistent with Biblical teaching, and I undertake to immediately advise the Church of any change in the information provided by me in this Application, or of any other information reasonably expected to impact my suitability when working with children and youth or any other area.

I agree to embrace and follow the BCWA Safe Churches Policy, Code of Good Leadership Practices and Risk Management & Safe Environment Guidelines.

Applicant's signature		Date	
Witness' signature		Date	

Please note: *The witness is to warrant the accuracy of the above Personal Details and is **NOT** to be a member of your family.*

Privacy Statement: The personal information you provide in this application is collected, stored and used by the Church in accordance with the Privacy Act, only for the purpose of the BCWA Safe Churches Policy. Your information will be securely stored and access to it carefully controlled. By making this application you agree to the Church disclosing this information to BCWA, and such Churches and other organisations as needed to fulfill this purpose. If some or all of this information is not provided, we may not be able to progress your application for Safe Churches Leadership.

Please return the completed form (marked CONFIDENTIAL) to your church ministry leader.

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Safe Churches

PLEASE ENTER NAME OF CHURCH OR ORGANISATION

Permission to Proceed

Ministry Area:			
Element		**Yes**	**No**
An outline of the ministry program and activities has been developed			
Leaders have been screened and selected according to BCWA Safe Church Policy and recommendations			
Activities have been assessed as suitable for the target group			
Levels of risk for activities has been assessed			
Levels of risk have been minimised where required			
An environment audit has been conducted			
Hazards identified have been addressed			
A senior First Aid Certificate (and/or other certification as required eg: Bronze Medallion for water based activities) is held by at least one leader			
All leaders have been briefed on policies and safe practices			
All necessary ministry forms have been developed			
Resources and equipment for ministry has been accessed			
Mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing the ministry have been developed			
Prepared by:		Date	
When all elements have been achieved, the Ministry Coordinator may approach the Senior Church Leadership for permission to proceed with ministry.			
Approved by:		Date	

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Safe Churches

PLEASE ENTER NAME OF CHURCH OR ORGANISATION

Accident / Complaint Report

To be completed where there has been an accident or incident involving physical injury, property damage, complaints or a breach of the Code of Good Leadership Practices.

Name of person filling in this report (Reporter)	
Ministry Coordinator:	
Contact Details:	

Nature of report:	☐ Accident causing personal injury		☐ Property damage
	☐ Breach of Code of Good Leadership Practices		☐ Complaint

Location of Incident:		Date/Time of incident:	

Describe the incident. Include specific location at venue, and the circumstances surrounding the incident.

Details of persons involved

Name:		Tel:	
Address:			

Were there any witnesses to the incident	☐ Yes	☐ No
If yes, contact details for any witnesses:		

Details of Witnesses

Name:		Tel:	
Address:			

Risk/Hazard

Did the incident occur as a result of a risk or hazard?	☐ Yes	☐ No
If yes, had the risk or hazard been identified prior to the activity commencing?	☐ Yes	☐ No

If yes, what measures were used to eliminate or control the risk or hazard?

What measures could be taken in the future to avoid a repeat of the incident?

Report submitted by:		Position in Church:	
Signature		Date	

Completed form (along with any required Hazard Identification Form) to be provided to the Church Safety Officer

PLEASE ENTER NAME OF CHURCH OR ORGANISATION

Food Safety Guidelines

Please check with your local council for further information on food safety and any local requirements. Eg: You may need permission from your local council when running any activity that includes the *sale* of food.

PREPARING FOOD

- Use separate utensils, including cutting boards and knives for raw food and cooked food. If this is not possible, thoroughly wash and sanitize equipment before using it.
- Wash all fruit and vegetables in clean water before using them.
- Don't use food from damaged packaging.
- Don't let raw food come into contact with cooked food to avoid cross contamination.

HANDLING FOOD

- Cooked or ready to eat food shouldn't be handled with bare hands. Use tongs, spatulas, spoons, or disposable gloves.
- Raw food to be cooked can be handled with bare (washed) hands.
- Change disposable gloves every hour &/or when they tear &/or when you change tasks.

COOKING AND HEATING

- Thaw frozen food before cooking, in microwave or at the bottom of the refrigerator.
- Never put thawed food back in the freezer.
- Cook thawed food immediately after thawing.
- Cook all foods completely, especially red meat, fish and chicken.
- Reheating: bring to boil and simmer for a minimum of 5 minutes before serving (or microwave using the manufacturer's guidelines.

STORING FOOD

- Temperature: meat, dairy or fish not already processed by heat are high risk foods. Store at the correct temperature, frozen (hard) at -15ºC or cooler or refrigerated at 5ºC or cooler.
- Time: Don't keep food in storage for too long. Record dates. Apply the "first in – first out" rule. Food should not be out of refrigeration for very long – 4 hours maximum.

DISPLAYING FOOD

- Wrap or cover food on display. Tag or label food trays, not the food.
- Refrigerated displays 5ºC or cooler and hot displays 60ºC or hotter.
- Don't use hot display equipment to reheat food.

TRANSPORTING FOOD

- Keep cold by using insulated containers like an Esky™ with ice or cold blocks.
- Food which is to be served hot should be transported cold and heated at event.

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PLEASE ENTER NAME OF CHURCH OR ORGANISATION

Participant Registration Form

Name of Program	
Name of Child/Young Person	
Address of Child/Young Person	
Phone Contact for Child/Young Person	
Name of Parent/Guardian	
Contact details for Parent/Guardian	
Name of person/s approved to provide transport to and from program	
Emergency contact person/s & contact details	
Please describe any special requirements, or guardianship issues you need to inform us about	

Our Church is a place where Christ's gospel of love, forgiveness and reconciliation is taught and practiced and children have the option to receive prayer. It is a place where all who seek God's love and help can come in safety.

All leaders in programs follow the Church's Safe Church Policy, Code of Good Leadership Practices, and Risk Management and Safe Environment Guidelines (*Copies available on request*).

Behaviour Expectation: Children/young people attending this program are expected to be courteous to others and follow instructions of the ministry leaders during the program.

Parent/Guardian permission:

I give my permission for my son/daughter/ward (*please circle as appropriate*) to attend the abovementioned Ministry program.

I have discussed the *behaviour expectation* with them and they have agreed to meet this expectation.

I give permission for medical treatment to be accessed during a medical emergency. I understand I will be contacted immediately should urgent medical treatment be necessary.

I understand that the information provided in this form is covered under the Privacy Act (1988) and that the Church will store any information that I provide securely.

Signature: _____Date: _____

Name: _____

Please complete the attached Medical Information Form and return it with Registration Form

Medical Information Form

INFORMATION FOR EMERGENCY USE ONLY

Name of child or young person	
Person to contact in an emergency	
Telephone No of emergency contact	
Name of Family Doctor	
Doctor's Address	
Doctor's Contact No	
Medicare number	
List any medical conditions your child suffers from	
List any allergies your child suffers from	
Medications to be administered in an emergency (*including any specific directions for administering the medication*)	

Parent / Guardian signature: _____ Date: _____

Baptist Churches
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Safe Churches

PLEASE ENTER NAME OF CHURCH OR ORGANISATION

Approved Driver Application

Name of applicant		
Current driver's licence number		Renewal date
Date of initial licence (*if less than 3 yrs*)		
List type of vehicles licensed to drive (car, truck, bus, etc)		
Are there any restrictions, endorsements or certifications related to your licence (eg: PTD authorisation), if so please supply details?		
Provide details of any vehicle accidents in which you have been involved as a driver in the past five years.**		
Give details of any traffic offences you have been convicted of in the past five years. (*Excluding parking offences*)**		
In the case of using private vehicles		
Who is the registered owner of the vehicle?		
Is the vehicle registration current?		
Is the vehicle insured? (*If so, please name your insurance company and level of cover*)		

All approved drivers using private vehicles must have insurance coverage.

Please attach a photocopy of current driver's license and relevant certifications to this completed form.

I confirm that the information I have supplied on this form is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

** If any of these details change, I agree to notify the Safe Church Administrative Officer.

Signed		Dated	

Application Received on:	
Application Processed by:	
Outcome of Application:	□ Application approved □ Application not approved

Reference Guide

The following reports, policy documents, handbooks and websites were used in the writing of this manual and are a good list of resources:

ACT Government Justice and Community Safety website: www.ors.act.gov.au

ACT Government Department of Education, Youth and Family Services, Reporting Child Abuse: Keeping Children And Young People Safe (Canberra: ACT Government Publishing Services, 2003)

Australian Government - Office of the Australian Information Commissioner - Privacy Act 2001 - website www.oaic.gov.au

Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia Now: Australian Social Trends, 2003, ABS website www.abs.gov.au

Australian Government - Australian Institute of Family Studies website: www.afis.gov.au

Australian Government Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2013 website www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au

Child Protection System, Reporting Child Abuse, 1999, Victorian Government Department of Human Services: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-service-providers/children,-youth-and-families/child-protection

Child Protection: NSW Ombudsman, http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/our-work/employment-related-child-protection

Child Protection ~ Watton on the Web ~ part of River Ministries, Norfolk, UK, http://www.watton.org/abuse/policy/

Child Protection, by UNICEF, http://http://www.unicef.org/protection/index.html

Children and Young People Act 1999, http://http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2008-19/default.asp

Children's Charter, General Synod Children's Network from the Children's Charter from the Office of Children's Guardian

Chris Storm: Bethany Community Support Melbourne, Presentation Paper FEELING SAFE, BEING STRONG - at the AIFS Conference 2008

Community Issues, NSW Police Force, http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/community_issues

Department for Child Protection and Family Support. Government of Western Australia. Child Protection. www.dcp.wa.gov.au

Department of Local Government and Communities, Government of Western Australia. Education and Care Regulatory Unit.

Elder Abuse Prevention and Assistance, ACT Government, Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services http://http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/wac/ageing/elder_abuse_prevention__and__assistance

Elder Abuse Prevention, Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development,http://http://www.seniorsonline.vic.gov.au/Home/Search-Results.aspx?q=Elder+Abuse+Prevention

Exploring Cultural Awareness, National CASA 2001, http://www.nccourts.org/Citizens/GAL/Documents/Workbook/chapter3.doc

Fortune, Rev Dr M 2009 Responding to Clergy Misconduct: A handbook, Faithtrust Institute.

Gestures: Body Language and Non-Verbal Communication, http://www.intranet.csupomona.edu/~tassi/gestures.htm#gestures

History of Child Protection in Australia, by Adam M. Thomison 2001, http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/fm2001/fm60/at.pdf

McClelland Heather, The Almond Tree: Child Sexual Abuse and the Church (stories from country Victoria) : Unpublished, printed Fyshwick ACT.

Ministries for the Episcopal Church, http://library.episcopalchurch.org/sites/default/files/model_policies.pdf

Model System for Lay Parish Church Workers, Anglican Church of Australia, http://www.anglican.org.au/docs/LAYPARISHWORKERS.pdf

NAPCAN What is child abuse?, http://www.napcan.org.au/What_is_Child_Abuse/what_is_child_abuse.html

NSW Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention (2000 edition), Commission for Children and Young People, www.kids.nsw.gov.au

NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act, 1998

NSW Child Protection (Working with Children) Act, 2012

NSW Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation, 2013

NSW Commission for Children and Young People, Office of the Children's Guardian website, www.kids.nsw.gov.au

NSW Department of Family and Community Services website, www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au

NSW Ombudsman www.nswombudsman.nsw.gov.au

Ormerod, Neil and Thea 1995, When Ministers Sin: Sexual abuse and the churches, Millenium Press: Alexandria: Sydney Australia

Office for Children, Youth & Family Support, Care & Protection Services, http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/ocyfs/care_protection.htm#CIS

Protecting children from abuse, http://medicineau.net.au/clinical/paediatrics/childabuse

Parkinson, Patrick 2003 ed 2, Child Sexual Abuse and the Churches: Understanding the Issues, Aquila Press. Sydney Australia

Robinson, Geoffrey 2007, Confronting power and sex in theCatholic church: reclaiming the spirit of Jesus, John Garret Press, Victoria Ausralia.

Risk Assessment Checklist: Our Church is a Safe Place, Baptist Union of Victoria, http://www.buv.com.au/docman/doc_download/787-risk-assessment-action-plan-template

Risk Management Manual Forms, http://www.canberragoulburn.anglican.org/HTML/publications/Riskmanagementmanual/riskmanagementforms.htm

NCCA Safe Church Training Agreement, www.safechurches.org.au

St Mark's National Theological Centre RTO, Principles of Protective Care & Child Protection, 2006.

Time: the History of Child Protection, http://society.guardian.co.uk/children/story/0,1074,809191,00.html

Who's Looking after the Kids? An Overview of Child Abuse and Child Protection in Australia, Greg McIntosh, Analysis and Policy and Janet Phillips, Information/E-links Social Policy Group, 2002, http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/SP/Child_Abuse.htm

Work Health and Safety Act 2011, http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/newlegislation2012/WHSlawandpolicy/Pages/

Disclaimer: Websites checked as of 13 December 2021