

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES
FRESH HOPE ARMIDALE – CHURCH OF CHRIST
SEPTEMBER 2014



fresh hope
Armidale - Church of Christ

Introduction

1.1 Policy Statement

Fresh Hope Armidale – Church of Christ is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all its members, leaders and particularly to children. The Church's Policy and Procedures aims to reduce the risk of abuse occurring, and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken should abuse occur.

1.2 Scope

The Policy and Procedures apply to:

- All child related ministries authorised by or under the control of the church, including those ministries undertaken at the church's premises or away from the church's premises.
- All leaders within the church engaged in child related ministries run by the church. These include Kids Church, Gravity Youth and the Music Worship Team.

1.3 Authority

These are the Policy and Procedures of Fresh Hope Armidale – Church of Christ and were adopted for use by the Church's governing body on (*Date). The church leadership team are committed to implementing the Policy and Procedures and training our leaders in its content and application.

1.4 Definitions

- **Child** - Any person under the age of 18.
- **Abuse** - Can consist of one or more of but is not restricted to the following:
 - Physical abuse – Any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as:
 - Hitting, punching, kicking (marks from belt buckles, fingers).
 - Shaking (particularly babies).
 - Burning (irons, cigarettes), biting, pulling out hair.
 - Alcohol or other drug administration.
 - Sexual abuse - Any sexual act or threat to perform such upon another person. It occurs when a person uses their power and authority to take advantage of another's trust to involve them in sexual activity. It does not necessarily involve genital contact but is any act which erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear consensual but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential.
 - Emotional abuse - The chronic attitude or behaviour of one person which is directed at another person or, the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a child's development, self-esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include: devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or chronic and extreme domestic violence in the child's presence.
 - Neglect - Characterised by the failure to provide for the child's basic needs. Any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a person's development.

- **Church** – Fresh Hope Armidale - Church of Christ
- **Helpers** - Any unpaid person over the age of 16 who is invited by a leader to assist them in their ministry.
- **Leader** - Any person (paid or unpaid) over the age of 18 who is responsible for the control and safety of members placed in their care whilst holding a formal position in a recognised ministry of the church. A leader could include but is not limited to: Religious practiser, Small group leaders, Music, drama or other ministry leaders, Counsellors, Youth leaders, Sunday school superintendents, Teachers, Kid's club leaders, Scripture teachers, Sports coaches and organisers.
- **Members** - Any person, including children, who attends or participates in church ministries.
- **Ministry** - Any organised activity that is authorised by the church.
- **Ministry Leader** - The person recognised and authorised by the church as head of a ministry.

2. External policies

We acknowledge that some ministries in the church might have external affiliation with other organisations. These organisations will possibly have policies governing the issues of member and/or child safety and abuse. The church's policy and procedures are not intended to replace or conflict with other policies, but instead to operate in conjunction with them.

3. Policy review

The Policy and Procedures will be reviewed annually at Leadership team meeting. Church decision makers will inform the ministries involved when the date of review will occur, and any changes recommended by the ministries should be submitted in writing to the decision makers for consideration one month before the review date. Any proposed changes will be put before the church for feedback before being implemented.

4. Obligations

4.1 Spiritual

The core beliefs of the church require us to treat all people with love and dignity and to care for those who are less powerful and in need of nurture and protection.

4.2 Legal

The church and its leaders are subject to Federal and State legislation and principles established through common law.

4.3 Ethical

Some actions may not be regarded as Abuse, but are unacceptable behaviour for church leaders. These include:

- Inappropriate conversation of a sexual nature.
- Coarse language, especially that of a sexual nature.
- Suggestive gestures or remarks.
- Jokes of a sexual nature.
- Inappropriate touching.
- Inappropriate literature (e.g. PG, M, MA, R or X rated material used with young children).

- Recording or filming without prior consent
- Acts of violence committed by a leader in the course of an activity.

The age of individuals is recognised as one of the determinants in deciding what acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is. Ministry leaders will ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained at all times.

5. Selection and screening

5.1 Leaders

Leaders involved in children's ministry must be carefully selected and screened. Prior to leaders commencing child-related ministries, the following precautions will be taken: Volunteer leaders will have regularly attended the church for at least 6 months.

Candidate leaders will complete an application form which requests details of relevant past experience, positions held, details of two referees and permission to contact them (see Appendix 1).

Referees will be checked and spoken to, using an agreed set of questions which have been drafted by the church (see Appendix 2). The questions will seek to establish the applicant's suitability for the role or position and the conversation will be documented and retained on file.

Short listed candidate leaders will be interviewed by an experienced and responsible member of the church prior to being accepted as a leader.

A NSW Working with Children Check will be requested and received prior to the leader commencing their proposed role if this role the leader engages with children.

Where the church has identified that an applicant has previously committed a violent or sexually related offence they cannot, under any circumstances, be considered for child related ministries. These offences do not preclude the applicant from serving in other ministries and the church, after careful consideration, might welcome the applicant's contribution in more appropriate areas.

5.2 Helpers

Helpers are expected to have an awareness of the content of the Child Protection Policy and Procedures of the church and be prepared to work within them. Any helper who provides assistance in a children's ministry must be supervised by a leader at all times and will be accountable to that leader. Leaders who accept the assistance of a helper must be satisfied of the helpers maturity and their suitability for children's ministry.

6. Training

All leaders will be issued with a copy of this policy and receive training covering the content of this document in more detail. In addition ministry leaders responsible for recruiting leaders for child related ministries will undertake further education on child/member protection. All

child related ministry leaders will need to have completed a safe ministry workshop or similar training. This seminar is also recommended for leaders in child related ministries.

7. A Safe environment

Incidents of abuse are unlikely to take place in front of another person and the presence of a witness can assist in clarifying questionable allegations. For these reasons, two leaders will always be present when working with or supervising children. Leaders will not visit children in their homes unless a parent is present or another leader accompanies them. As a general rule, leaders should not be alone with a child in a car. Where this is not practical, leaders will take children directly to and from arranged venues; will attempt to only transport children short distances; will not spontaneously detour or make additional arrangements and will have the written permission of parents or carers for the child to travel with the leader (if written permission is not practical verbal permission will be accepted as an interim measure).

All personal pastoral care is to be carried out within sight of another leader. Leaders will respect a member's feelings and privacy when engaging in physical contact of any kind. Adults and children are expected to respect each other's privacy during activities that require undressing, dressing or changing clothes. Leaders will set an example by protecting their own privacy in similar situations. No leader will be alone in a room with a child while either is changing.

Initiations and secret ceremonies are prohibited. All aspects of every child-related program will be open to observation by parents/guardians. Leaders have the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at child-related activities to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.

8. Disciplining children

It is not the responsibility of the church or its leaders to discipline a child. If a child does not abide by the rules set down by the leader, or is an obstruction to the care of other children or may cause harm to other children, the child will be removed and referred back to their parent or guardian. At no time will a Leader administer any form of physical, emotional or mental discipline.

9. Reporting procedures

An independent person will from NSW Churches of Christ by the church with the specific duty of dealing with any allegations that arise. The name, address and contact telephone number will be freely available to all leaders. The number for Churches of Christ NSW is 02 8719 2600. Documented reporting and escalation procedures will be established by the church for handling allegations of abuse. If there are reasonable grounds to suspect a child has been or is suffering abuse, the police and the church's insurer will be contacted immediately. The phone number for the police is: 67710 699. The phone number for our church insurer is 1300 650 540. Reasonable grounds can be assumed when:

1. A child discloses that he or she has been abused, and/or
2. Someone close to a child (e.g. sibling, relative, close friend) discloses on behalf of that child.

The police will also be notified if a child discloses an incident of abuse that has occurred somewhere other than the church (e.g. home or school). If a disclosure of abuse is made, the person who receives the disclosure will maintain appropriate pastoral care to the one making the disclosure. This will include:

- Treating each allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim. The matter should not be swept under the carpet.
- Not pushing the child to disclose details of the alleged assault or attempting to investigate the allegation.
- Assuring the child that they are understood: that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has happened is not their fault, and that they are correct in disclosing the incident.
- Reporting the abuse to the police and the church's insurer.
- Not making contact with the alleged perpetrator. If the leader is already providing counsel to the alleged perpetrator, it may be advisable for another person to assume this responsibility for the duration of any investigation.

If the alleged assault has taken place recently, clothing worn by the child should be retained and handed to the police for forensic examination.

An accident/incident report form (Appendix 3) will need to be completed. This form is to be completed by an adult witness whenever an incident requiring secondary medical attention or allegation of abuse occurs to a leader or child.

Maintaining confidentiality

Any disclosures by a child, reports of suspected abuse and all details of the subsequent investigation will be documented promptly and the documents will be held in a secure location where a breach of privacy cannot occur. The church reserves the right to carry out church disciplinary procedures in accordance with the constitution of the church. Where an allegation is made the accused leader will be removed from all children's ministry pending the outcome of all investigations.

10. Alcohol and drugs

The consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs on church grounds or during an activity is not to be allowed or condoned by any leader. Any child found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is to be counselled and the parents/guardians contacted so the child can be returned home immediately. Any child required to take prescription medication will provide a letter from their parents/guardians to the ministry leader.

11. Risk management

As part of the commitment of Fresh Hope Armidale to create safe ministry spaces child related ministries and the church leadership team will regularly review risk management and make changes to ministry activities as necessary.

APPENDIX 1: WORKING WITH CHILDREN APPLICATION FORM

Position applied for: _____

Full Name: _____

Residential address: _____

Home Phone: _____ **Mobile Phone:** _____

Email address: _____

Please list all the places of worship that you have attended regularly in the last 3 years?

Date (approximately)	Place of worship

Please list any qualifications you have that relate to working with children

Date	Qualification	Institution

Please provide any experience you have had that relates to working with children

Date	Organisation	Position

References: Please provide details of two people we can contact, who can comment on your suitability for this position

First referee

Full Name: _____

Residential address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Mobile Phone: _____

Email address: _____

Position and organisation: _____

Second Referee

Full Name: _____

Residential address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Mobile Phone: _____

Email address: _____

Position and organisation: _____

Declarations:

I have:

- Never had someone express concerns about my behaviour towards a child.
- Never been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of an investigation relating to the abuse of a child or inappropriate sexual behaviour.

I confirm that the information provided in this application for is true and correct.

Applicants signature:

Date:

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The questions asked in this interview may make you feel a little uncomfortable but they are a necessary part of our child protection policy. The answers that you provide will be kept confidential where possible but may need to be discussed with other leaders in the church if necessary.

1. Why have you applied for this position and why do you feel that you are suited to this role?
2. Please describe any positive experiences you have had with children or young people.
3. Please describe any negative experiences that you have had with children or young people.

Please tick either “yes” or “no” for each question.

If the answer to any of the following questions is “yes”, please give details on a separate page.

NOTE: A “yes” answer will not automatically rule an applicant out of selection.

Question	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? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual contact with someone under your care other than your spouse (such as 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 • Violent 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. Have you a history of alcohol abuse or a history of substance abuse including prescription, over-the-counter, recreational or illegal drugs?		

APPENDIX 3: CHILD ACCIDENT AND INJURY REPORT FORM

This form is to be completed by an adult witness whenever an incident requiring secondary medical attention or allegation of abuse occurs to a leader or child (e.g. injury leading to child going to a medical centre). The completed form should be given to the parents/guardians of the child or young person, and a copy needs to be filed away for future reference (securely).

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of group:

Adult supervisor:

Name of injured person: _____

Birth date: ___/___/___ Age: ___

Names of parents/guardians:

Address:

Phone:

Date of incident: _____ Time of incident: _____

DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT

1. Describe the incident (use the back of page if necessary):

2. Where in the facility did it happen?

3. What area of the person's body was injured?

4. What was the person doing when the incident happened?

5. How did the incident happen?

6. Names of leaders supervising at the time of the incident:

7. Name(s) of any other witnesses to the incident:

8. How did the person respond after the incident?

9. Was first aid given or some other action taken? (please circle) YES NO

If yes, by whom?

I/we acknowledge that I/we have been notified of the accident/injury:

Signature of parent

Date:

Action has been taken to address risk (as relevant)