

**DUTY of CARE and CHILD  
PROTECTION GUIDELINES**



**CORE  
GUIDELINES  
DOCUMENT**

**January 2016**

# Duty of Care & Child Protection Guidelines

## Australia

Endorsed October 2014 by  
CRC National Council

# Duty of Care & Child Protection Guidelines

## CRC Churches International Australia

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### PREAMBLE

CRC Churches International Australia is committed to maintaining high moral and ethical integrity of its churches and ministers. It is vital that ministers understand the Biblical, Legal & Ministry requirements for themselves and for every local church to provide a child\* safe environment for children and young people under their care.

Endorsed by CRC Churches Australian National Council in October 2014, the following guidelines have been adapted & updated from: *Recommended Guidelines for Duty of Care (May, 2003)*. They are provided to help each local church in our CRC family understand that they are responsible for the health and safety of children and teenagers under their care; to assist local churches in developing and implementing their own policy for Duty of Care; and, to make every CRC church aware they must do all in their power to protect those in their care from all forms of abuse.

Each CRC church is encouraged to develop and or review their current Duty of Care policy in accordance with these guidelines and set in place necessary changes. Churches are also encouraged to review, update and record the endorsement of their Duty of Care policy annually – in line with any changes to their State / Territory legislation and any future updates to these guidelines (as endorsed by CRC Churches Australian National Council).

In the event a local church does not set in place sufficient policies that ensure legal compliance with their State's Child safe environment / Child Protection Legislation and Best Practice according to these guidelines, no responsibility will be held by CRC Churches International or CRC Australia National Executive for failure to do so.

Minister's should therefore ensure they understand and outwork their own local church Duty of Care policy recognising that in this matter it's vital we are not just legally complying, but are endeavouring to be beyond reproach.

\*Child refers to any young person under the age of 18.

There are a number of actions that churches will need to undertake in order to outwork this policy. This will need to happen at leadership level, at board level and at youth or children's leaders' level.

 This symbol will be used throughout this policy as an indication that some action needs to be undertaken. When you reach these points in the document **STOP** and consider how you will outwork the recommendations given.

**Duty of Care Compliance Requirements for Credentialed CRC Ministers**

A resolution was passed at the last CRC National Council meeting held on October 1, 2015 at Kingston City Church regarding Duty of Care compliance for all CRC Ministers holding a credential, including those holding Retired credentials. This is to provide the best care we can for those most vulnerable in our communities, children and young people.

The resolution is (quoted); “That all CRC Ministers be required to have an up-to-date police check and have relevant, recent training pertaining to Duty of Care for Children and Youth in order to have a CRC credential. A phase-in period will be allowed, which will be until June 30, 2016, to give all CRC Credentialed Ministers the opportunity to fulfill this new requirement.”

Details to support credentialed ministers in becoming and remaining compliant with this resolution is available on the CRC website, as a part of the Ministry Manual ([crcchurches.org](http://crcchurches.org) ... navigate to Document Library) or by contacting the CRC National Office.

*“The test of the morality of  
a society is what it does for  
its children.”*

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer: German theologian and renowned Lutheran Pastor killed in a Nazi concentration camp; author, [The Cost of Discipleship](#).*

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Thanks also to Jane Philpot, a volunteer in the National Office, for the time and effort spent in editing and cross-referencing to produce the booklets in the current form.

## INTRODUCTION

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Child protection is a significant issue in today's society and the Christian Church is not exempt from this responsibility. Every effort must be taken to eliminate the potential for child abuse and do all in our power to create child safe environments within our local churches.

Effective child protection requires a holistic approach from government entities, non government entities and members of the community. While the focus of identification of child abuse or neglect must remain strong we must additionally adopt approaches that involve early intervention and prevention.

In the past we have maintained a loving and open acceptance of all people, trusting that as they become 'new creations' (2 Corinthians 5:17) in the image of Jesus Christ, that such things as mistrust and abuse will not occur. Unfortunately this is not always the case.

Children and young people are extremely valued by our Heavenly Father and those in our care must be protected to the best of our ability. For this reason, as well making sure we are outworking due diligence and remaining effective witnesses for Christ, we present these guidelines for your use.

The guidelines below provide comprehensive, although not exhaustive, guidelines to assist each local church in being vigilant to ensure that the children and young people under their care are protected and safe. Individual churches are to outwork reasonable care for children in their own ministry location & programs and may be required by law to account how they have demonstrated / are demonstrating this care. As a minimum CRC Churches are to include the ***CRC Code of Practice for Interactions with Children, Youth and the General Public (Booklet 2)***; ***CRC Standard Procedures for Running a Children's or Youth Program (Booklet 3)*** and; ***CRC Standard Procedures for Responding to Suspected Abuse (Booklet 4)*** in their own Duty of Care & Child Protection. In the event of any abuse within specific programs or ministries it is important that appropriate actions are taken immediately (*See Booklet 4, Pages 4 and 5*).

It is also vital to familiarise yourself with relevant state legislation regarding Mandatory Notification (*see Core Guidelines Document Page 17*) and screening requirements for staff and volunteers. Go through the Best Practice Guidelines outlined in this document with your leadership team and involve your Board of Elders. (*See Core Guidelines Document Page 7*)

Children's Ministry Leaders/Volunteers and Youth Leaders/Volunteers, as well as CRC ministers and Eldership teams must also be aware that they could be held liable in a court of law and face possible fines if they fail to report suspected child abuse/neglect or fail to manage allegations of abuse in a legal, transparent or timely way.

As such, all leaders and volunteers in Children & Youth Ministries and those currently holding any form of CRC Credential must familiarise themselves regarding how to make a report to their relevant reporting authority. They must also be appropriately screened and also outwork their local church policy, procedures and training requirements.

Senior Ministers / Lead Pastors and Eldership teams need to have a clear plan for responding to and managing allegations of abuse effectively (*Booklet 7, Pages 7 to 9*) by knowing how to:

- Outwork their duty of care compassionately
- Attend to immediate needs of victim(s) and offer ongoing support
- Liaise with & take advice from relevant authorities as required
- Communicate wisely with Parents/Carers and other parties affected
- Diligently protect other potential victims from harm
- Follow legal due process in relating to alleged abusers
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality

**CRC National Council has adopted as Best Practice for all CRC churches:**

1. Leaders and volunteers in Children's / Youth ministries (including those who have access to contact details / medical information of children and youth in specific programs / ministry events)

**AND**

All ordained CRC trainee ministers, ministers and national ministers...

*...are required to report suspected child\* abuse and neglect that has occurred, or is likely to occur, to their relevant reporting authority (see Booklet 4, pages 9 and 10). This is our practice even if those outlined above are not mandated by individual state /territory legislation to report.*

2. Any person working with children or young people under age 18, and all CRC trainee ministers, ministers and national ministers will undergo a screening process before they are appointed / credentialed which will require an interview, a National Police Check/Working with Children Check and the completion of forms.

3. Children/youth ministry leaders and volunteers and all those holding a current CRC credential will be required by their local churches to undergo Mandated Notification training & refresher updates as relevant to their role.

4. Each local church is responsible for tailoring/outsourcing Mandatory Notification training relevant to the ministry role /level of responsibility of those who require it.

Jesus clearly demonstrated his loving concern for children in Matthew 18 and we must take seriously Paul's direction to: *"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!" (Acts 20:28-31)*

We affirm that we have a legal and moral obligation to protect and care for our children, and as a family of CRC churches we expect each local church to be diligent in this regard.

\*A child or young person is defined as any person under age of 18 years of age.

## CHILDREN'S CHARTER

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### *NURTURE OF THE CHILD*

*"Children are a heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is a gift" (Psalm 127:4)*

The church is called:

- To receive, nurture and treasure each child as a gift from God
- To acknowledge and support the role of parents as primary nurturers of children
- To proclaim the Gospel to children in ways that empower them to receive and respond to Christ's love
- To give high priority to the quality of planning and preparation for all children's ministry and to the support of Parents/Carers and those who minister with them
- To include children as full participants in the worshipping community and in the Church's common life of prayer, witness and service

### *MINISTRY TO THE CHILD*

*"Then Jesus took the children in his arms, placed his hands on each of them and blessed them" (Mark 10:16)*

The church is called to:

- Love, shelter, protect and defend children within its own community and in the world, especially those who are abused, neglected or in danger
- Nurture and support families in caring for their children, acting in their children's best interest, and recognizing and fostering their children's spirituality and unique gifts

- Embrace children who seek Christian nurture independently of their Parents/Carer's participation in the church, while maintaining communication with parents and seeking consent for their child's involvement where required.
- Advocate for the integrity of childhood and the dignity of all children at every level of our religious, social, political, educational and economic structures

### MINISTRY OF THE CHILD

*"A little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:61)*

The church is called to:

- Receive children's unique gifts
- Value the influence of a child's faith within his/her own family
- Value children's ministry within their own family network
- Foster community beyond the family unit, in which children, youth and adults know each other by name, minister to each other, and are partners together in serving Christ in the world
- Appreciate children's abilities and readiness to represent Christ and his Church, to witness to him wherever they may be, and according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world, and to take their place in the life, worship and decision-making of the church

## Child Safe Organisations

### What is a Child Safe Organisation?

*A child safe organisation is committed to protecting children in its care. It understands the nature and risks of child abuse and has an open and aware culture. Child abuse can be discussed and reported safely. Policies and procedures are developed to protect children and staff/volunteers. Establishing and maintaining a child safe environment is a vital consideration in all of its activities and management practices. A child safe organisation will develop child protection policy and procedures. It will put policy into practice, ensuring all service users and participants are aware of organisational policy and commitment to child protection. In an organisation with a culture of child safety, voicing a concern is not viewed as an accusation. Staff and volunteers will have confidence that their concerns will be dealt with confidentially in a responsible and prompt way.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> From *12 Steps to Building Child Safe Organisations* – Child Wise [www.childwise.net](http://www.childwise.net)  
Established in 1991, Child Wise is one of Australia's leading not-for-profit child sexual abuse prevention organisations. Child Wise has achieved significant recognition and credibility within the sector and from Government for our award winning and innovative prevention programs primarily focused on creating child safe organisations.

In Australia a *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* is currently underway, with the first report from this inquiry due 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014. The Commissioners, chaired by Justice Peter McClellan AM, will look at all of the institutions where child sexual abuse took place. This includes institutions that have closed down. They will ask whether institutions have done a good job to stop child sexual abuse from happening.

Specifically the Commissioners will ask whether institutions are:

1. *Aware that abuse can happen;*
2. *Know if abuse is happening,*
3. *Tell Police or other authorities if abuse is happening and;*
4. *Prevent abuse from happening again.*

Based on their findings, they will then make recommendations concerning the law, government plans or policies and the way institutions are to operate to protect children and prevent child abuse. Future recommendations from this Royal Commission and how they apply to CRC Churches Australia will be carefully considered. As part of our CRC Churches Australian National Council's commitment to protecting children and preventing abuse, these guidelines are intended for use as an ongoing reference for each local church. They also provide a step by step guide that each local church leadership team can outwork in the process of building a child safe culture within their church.

## Steps 1–4: TAKING RESPONSIBILITY – *where to start?*

### Step 1: Understand Child Abuse

*“Understanding child abuse is the first step in building a child safe organisation. To protect children in your care you need to know the potential risks and indicators of child abuse. It is only with this knowledge and understanding that you can develop effective child protection policies and child abuse prevention practices.”* Child Wise Booklet, [12 Steps to Building Child Safe Organisations](#) - [www.childwise.net](http://www.childwise.net)

### **What is Child Abuse?**

A widely held definition for abuse of a child is suggested by the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect:

*“Child abuse is the proportion of harm to children that results from human action that is proscribed, proximate and preventable.”* (Finkelhor and Korbin 1988)

Child maltreatment refers to any non-accidental behaviour by parents, caregivers, other adults or older adolescents that is outside the norms of conduct and entails a substantial risk of causing physical or emotional harm to a child or young person. Such behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and can include acts of omission (i.e., neglect) and commission (i.e., abuse) (Bromfield, 2005; Christoffel, et al., 1992).

### *A Child Focused Approach*

*It is imperative for us to always maintain a **child focus** when considering child abuse and neglect. A child focus means that we look first at what the effect of the situation is on the child, presently and in the future. That is opposed to an adult focus which focuses on the adult offender and looks for reasons to excuse their abusive behaviour. It is never the child's fault that abuse has occurred. The adult (or minor offender under age 18) must always be held accountable for their behaviour.*

### **CRC DUTY OF CARE BOOKLET 1 – Child Abuse ... Understanding and Awareness**

This accompanying booklet fully explains the latest understanding of child abuse.

 Go thorough Booklet 1 together as a team (as a leadership team, the Board of Elders, and as a group of youth or children's leaders). Discuss the definitions of child abuse together. Were there any new discoveries? Make sure that everyone in leadership and everyone working with children have a common understanding about what is defined as child abuse. **Every new person in leadership and every new child worker should go through this process as a part of their induction into their role.**

**Step 2 – Develop and maintain an open & aware culture**

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*“Child abuse thrives on secrecy. To prevent child abuse in your organisation you need to develop and maintain an open and aware culture. Staff, volunteers and children need to be aware of appropriate/inappropriate behaviour. They need to feel encouraged and safe to raise any concerns. If all participants are aware of child abuse and the organisation encourages open discussion and scrutiny, it becomes more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.”* Child Wise Booklet, 12 Steps to Building Child Safe Organisations - [www.childwise.net](http://www.childwise.net)

**Rights of Children Parents/Carers and Team/Members/Church Leaders:****Children have the right to:**

- Be safe
- Be listened to
- Be respected
- Privacy
- Take calculated risks in a protected setting
- An inclusive environment

**Parents / Carers have the right to:**

- Be informed
- Listened to

**Team Members / Church Leaders have the right to:**

- Be respected
- Be listened to
- Be safe
- Be supported
- On-going information and training on all aspects of child protection & prevention

 Have the church and children's leadership teams complete the evaluation tool below.

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Strategise how you will improve any areas that fall below a satisfactory score

## Evaluate How Child Safe Your Local Church *Really* Is

On a scale of 1-10 with 1 being '**never**' and 10 being '**always**':

1. *Are you welcoming and respectful towards children, young people and their parents / caregivers?*

Never [1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10] Always

2. *Are you respecting staff/ volunteers by providing support, training and clear guidelines to do their roles well?*

Never [1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10] Always

3. *Are you identifying potential risks to children?*

Never [1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10] Always

4. *Are you working continuously to prevent and reduce these risks?*

Never [1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10] Always

5. *Are you transparent with Parents / Carers and welcoming of their feedback?*

Never [1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10] Always

6. *Are you valuing children by asking their ideas / views and also listening to them?*

Never [1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10] Always

## Strategies to Develop and Maintain an Open & Aware Culture

- *Be preventative* rather than reacting to an unfortunate incident after it happens
- *Understand and act* on the moral and legal imperatives of protecting children in your care
- *Acknowledge the damage* an incident of abuse would do to the child and their family, people within and outside your local church, as well as with the witness of the church itself.
- Introduce safeguards that will protect children, staff, volunteers and your local church
- *Have clear boundaries* of roles between staff/volunteers and children
- *Be open* to outside accountability
- *Have adequate staff/volunteers*, staff supervision and training
- *Recognise and act* on children's rights
- *Know* that your local church is doing all that it can to protect children

A child safe organisation is created by putting in place the above strategies. Individually, each strategy reduces the risk of harm to children, but collectively they create child safe organisations and prevent child abuse.

Each step in these guidelines are intended to help you build a child safe culture in your church.

## Step 3 – Identify risks / dangers to children

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*“Once you are aware of how and why child abuse occurs you need to consider the risks to children in your organisation and programs. Risk management is child abuse prevention. You need to identify potential risks and ways children can be harmed in your organisation. Only by identifying risks can you develop strategies to minimise and prevent child abuse. Risk means the potential for something to go wrong. Risk management means identifying the potential for an accident or incident to occur and taking steps to reduce the possibility of it occurring. Risk management is a generic process that can be applied to the prevention of child abuse.” - Child Wise Booklet, [12 Steps to Building Child Safe Organisations](http://www.childwise.net) - [www.childwise.net](http://www.childwise.net)*

A Risk Management Process should identify risk and also identify preventative strategies.



Have the church and children’s leadership teams complete the evaluation tool below.

Discuss the means and timeline for eliminating any unacceptable risk factors that you discover.

### Identify Risks

Identify risks by considering the following questions:

1. In which areas do children’s programs or church activities involving children take place?  
*(Take into consideration all areas where specific programs are run as well as where unplanned or church social gatherings occur.)*
2. What risks are present in each area?  
*(Observations should include the physical structure of each area to determine accessibility to children, safety and comfort)*
3. Analyse the consequences of each identified risk
4. Determine what issues are most likely to occur and how often

## Identify Preventative Strategies

**Control risks** by considering the following questions:

1. What risk reducing actions need to be implemented to protect children and prevent abuse?
2. Who will be the appointed person(s) responsible for overseeing these actions?

**Review and Revise** by regularly asking:

1. Are the risks / potential dangers to children that we've identified still current?
2. Are there any further risks that have been identified?
3. Are the agreed measures to control risks being implemented?
4. Are the agreed measures to control risks effective?

**Communicate and consult** with all teams involved on a regular basis to build commitment and increase implementation.

## Step 4 – Know your legal responsibilities & CRC responsibilities

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*“Organisations providing services to children and young people are increasingly facing legal action for abuse of children in their care. They can also face legal action over their response to allegations of child abuse. In addressing allegations of child abuse the organisation needs to prove that they have taken “all reasonable steps” (doing as much as possible) to prevent any abuse. Organisations may be held liable for failure to prevent ‘foreseeable’ abuse. An organisation’s failure to take “reasonable steps” to prevent abuse may be construed as a contributing factor to the abuse. A claim of negligence may then be made for breach of ‘duty of care’.”* Child Wise Booklet, *12 Steps to Building Child Safe Organisations* - [www.childwise.net](http://www.childwise.net)

### State / Territory Laws Regarding Mandatory Reporting

STATE	MANDATORY REPORTING LEGISLATION
ACT	Section 356 of the Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT)
NSW	Sections 23 and 27 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)
NT	Sections 15 and 26 of the Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 (NT)
QLD	Section 148 of the Child Protection Act 1999 (QLD), Sections 191–192 and 158 of the Public Health Act 2005 (QLD), Section 20 of the Commission for Children Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 (QLD)
SA	Section 11 of the Children’s Protection Act 1993 (SA)
TAS	Sections 13 and 14 of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 (TAS)
VIC	Sections 182(1) a–e, 184 and 162 c–d of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (VIC)
WA	Section 160 of the Western Australia Family Court Act 1997 (WA); Regulation 20 of the Child Care Services Regulations 2006; Regulation 19 of the Child Care Services (Family Day Care) Regulations 2006; Regulation 20 of the Child Care Services (Outside School Hours Family Day Care) Regulations 2006; Regulation 21 of the Child Care Services (Outside School Hours Care) Regulations 2006, Section 124B of the Children and Community Services Act 2004

**\*NOTE – GO TO BOOKLET 4, pages 9 to 10 for the relevant Reporting Authority for your State / Territory**

## CRC Best Practice

CRC Churches Australian National Council has adopted as Best Practice for all CRC churches:

**1. Leaders and volunteers in Children's / Youth ministries (including those who have access to contact details / medical information of children and youth in specific programs / ministry events)**

**AND**

**All ordained CRC trainee ministers, ministers and national ministers...**

***...are required to report suspected child abuse and neglect that has occurred, or is likely to occur, to their relevant reporting authority. This is our practice even if those outlined above are not mandated by individual state/territory legislation to report.***

**2. Any person working with children or young people under age 18 and all CRC trainee ministers, ministers and national ministers will undergo a screening process before they are appointed / credentialed which will require an interview, a National Police Check/Working with Children Check and the completion of forms.**

**3. Children/youth ministry leaders and volunteers and all those holding a current CRC credential will be required by their local churches to undergo Mandated Notification training & refresher updates as relevant to their role.**

**4. Each local church is responsible for tailoring/outsourcing mandatory notification training relevant to the ministry role / level of responsibility of those who require it.**

## STEPS 5-7: Developing a Duty of Care & Child Protection Policy – *protecting children and preventing abuse*

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### Step 5 – Create Clear Boundaries

*“Once your organisation has identified risks to children in your care you need to implement policies and procedures to address and minimise those risks. The framework is a Child Protection Policy. A Child Protection Policy is a statement of your commitment to child safety and outlines the strategies of how the organisation will meet this commitment. It will provide guidance to the everyday practices and longer term work of your organisation. Your policy is also a way to describe your commitment to child protection. The role of policy is to provide principles, and to guide decisions and action on child protection issues. Everyone benefits from a Child Protection Policy that provides clear direction and a pre-planned uniform approach to issues that arise.”* Child Wise Booklet, [12 Steps to Building Child Safe Organisations](#) - [www.childwise.net](http://www.childwise.net)

## Know What to Include

### A Duty of Care & Child Protection Policy should include:

- Your church’s / organisation’s commitment to child protection and prevention of abuse
- Definitions and Behavioural Indicators of child abuse
- Some information about offenders
- Mandated Notifiers
- How your church will screen and endorse people entrusted to work with / have access to children
- How to identify risks and put preventative strategies in place
- Reporting suspected abuse to relevant state/territory authority
- How to inform your leadership team of reports made
- Team Leader responsibilities for running a safe program
- Clear process for how to raise and report concerns
- How your leadership team will support:
  - Children who have experienced abuse;
  - Staff who have allegations made against them;
  - Parents/Carers who have raised complaints or whose children have been abused;
  - Other participants and workers affected by the situation
- How Team Members should respond when bullying is identified

- How Team Members can offer support for children/young people dealing with Mental Health issues
- How Team Members can help children / young people at risk of suicide
- First steps response plan in the event of critical incidents
- Expectations re ongoing training

A Duty of Care and Child Protection Policy is a living document. You must ensure your practice is consistent with your policy, and is regularly revised and updated.

## Develop a Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct (also known as a Code of Behaviour or Behaviour Protocol/Guideline) is a central element of developing your church's Duty of Care & Child Protection Policy. A Code of Conduct is a straightforward list of do's and don'ts for staff and volunteers. It minimises grey areas, highlights inappropriate behaviours and lets everyone know the rules.

### A Code of Conduct Should Address:

- Physical contact/touching
- Sign in/sign out procedures
- Respect for privacy
- Confidentiality
- Language
- Favouritism/'special' relationships
- Perceptions & appearances
- Out of hours contact
- Discipline/Behaviour Management
- Cultural sensitivity
- Bullying
- Adult/child ratios
- Consideration of Children with Special Needs
- Sleeping arrangements
- Reporting concerns
- Social Media / Online Behaviour
- Toileting and bathing arrangements
- Safety Factors

A Code of Conduct clearly describes appropriate behaviours when relating to children within church programs/activities /ministries (and what are inappropriate behaviours). It sets out clear boundaries for staff/volunteers, parents/caregivers and all participants that limit the risk of child abuse

occurring, promote accountability, and, provide direction for anyone working with children/young people.

Anyone who is given responsibility to work with or have access to children or young people as part of your church needs to know how they are expected to relate to children/youth in their care at all times. Your Code of Conduct must clearly outline how your church expects team members to interact with children, parents/caregivers and the public, as representatives of your church.

**At a minimum your church's Duty of Care & Child Protection Policy should include the information provided in Booklets 2, 3 and 4 accompanying this Main Policy Document. These are:**

*Booklet 2 - CRC Code of Practice for Interactions with Children, Youth and the General Public*

*Booklet 3 - CRC Standard Procedures for Running a Children's or Youth Program, and;*

*Booklet 4 - CRC Standard Procedures for Responding to Suspected Abuse.*

**It is imperative that the guidelines in these three booklets are implemented in all CRC Churches across Australia.**

### **CRC DUTY OF CARE BOOKLET 2 – CRC Code of Practice for Interactions with Children, Youth and the General Public**

### **CRC DUTY OF CARE BOOKLET 3 – CRC Standard Procedures for Running a Children's or Youth Program**

These accompanying booklets all provide vital information about various aspects of the Duty of Care process.

 Go thorough Booklets 2 and 3 together as a team (as a leadership team, the Board of Elders, and as a group of youth or children's leaders). Discuss the information included. What changes do you need to make to ensure that these guidelines are followed from here on? Make sure that everyone in leadership and everyone working with children have a common understanding about what is needed to provide adequate Duty of Care to children in all your church's activities. **Every new person in leadership and every new child worker should go through this process as a part of their induction into their role.**

## CRC DUTY OF CARE BOOKLET 4 – CRC Standard Procedures for Responding to Suspected Abuse

 The leadership team of the church and of the children's and youth workers should familiarise themselves with this document, which will need to be used if any abuse is suspected. **Choose one of you key leaders to be a 'Responding to Abuse' expert, who knows this process well. They can then offer speedy and correct advice if any issues arise.**

## Step 6 - Adopt Best Practise in Selection & Appointment

*"To be child safe, children's organisations need to employ the best applicants for both paid and unpaid positions. Use the recruitment and selection process to attract positive role models for children and people who will embrace the child protection principles of your organisation. Organisations also need to be vigilant in their recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers to reduce the risk of employing unsuitable people. Child sex offenders will target organisations that are unaware of the risks and dangers of child abuse and who conduct little or no screening. Organisations need to adopt a structured and systematic approach to recruitment and selection for all staff and volunteers."* Child Wise Booklet, [12 Steps to Building Child Safe Organisations - www.childwise.net](http://www.childwise.net)

Many potential instances of child abuse can be avoided if the correct people are appointed to work with children and youth, and the inappropriate people are prevented from doing so. Therefore, the process of selection and appointment of people to work in this area is crucial.

## CRC DUTY OF CARE BOOKLET 5 – Best Practice in Selection and Appointment

 This booklet should be used to inform your process of selecting and appointing children's and youth workers. **The person or people responsible for this process should ensure that they have familiarised themselves with the recommendations of this booklet.** Do you need to change your processes? If so, who will implement these changes?

**Step 7 – Make *CRC Guidelines for Responding to Children and Young People at Risk* available to Team Members*****CRC Guidelines for Responding to Children and Young People at Risk***

The guidelines in Booklet 6 are to be made available to Team Members who work with or have access to children or young people in a ministry or program at your church. They are intended to help Team Members identify children or young people that may be dealing with bullying, declining mental health or are at risk of suicide and help Team Members know how to offer support and referral to professional help as required.

**CRC DUTY OF CARE BOOKLET 6 – Package for Team Members – Responding to Children and Youth at Risk**

 Have a workshop or seminar with everyone in your church who works with children or youth. Go through this booklet together. Ensure that everyone understands their responsibility in their Duty of Care. Make this booklet a part of the induction process for all new workers in the child and youth areas.

NOTE – If your church is a part of the **CHILDSAFE** program, then this training can be undertaken online by all child and youth workers prior to starting with the teams.

## **Steps 8-9: Taking Action – *managing allegations of abuse & developing a critical response plan***

### **Step 8- Managing Allegations of Abuse<sup>2</sup>**

Senior Ministers / Lead Pastors and Eldership teams need to have a clear plan for responding to and managing allegations of abuse effectively by knowing how to:

- Outwork their duty of care compassionately
- Attend to immediate needs of victim(s) and offer ongoing support
- Liaise with & take advice from relevant authorities as required
- Communicate wisely with Parents/Carers and other parties affected
- Diligently protect other potential victims from harm
- Follow legal due process in relating to alleged abuser
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality

### **Step 9 – Develop a Critical Incident Response Plan**

Incidents happen to all of us even with careful planning and attention to safety. Some incidents are more serious than others. Critical incidents include, but are not limited to:

- Serious vehicle accidents
- Death of a participant
- Lost or significantly injured participant (I.e. lost for more than several hours, injuries requiring emergency evacuation)
- Natural tragedy (e.g. bushfire, flood)
- Significant violence between participants
- Sexual assault
- Participant engaging in significant self-harm
- Suicidal participant, attempted or actual suicide

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from *Guidelines For Managing Allegations of Sexual Abuse: Dabelle Inquiry 2013*, South Australia

## CRC DUTY OF CARE BOOKLET 7 – Responding to Allegations of Abuse and Critical Incident Response

 As a leadership team for the church, or as a church board, go through this booklet. Be aware of the process and recommendations included. Utilise this booklet if there is a need to respond to any allegations to ensure that correct procedures are adhered to.

### Steps 10-12: Preventative Measures – *ongoing training and evaluation*

#### Step 10 – Provide education and ongoing training to all participants appropriate to their role

“Education and training are fundamental tools in building a child safe organisation. Whether you are implementing new programs and policies or reinforcing existing ones, all staff, volunteers, children and their families should be informed and educated. This is another component of developing an open and aware culture and ensuring your risk management policies and procedures are widely understood and implemented. If participants do not know what to do, they will not be able to prevent child abuse. Training programs and education for staff and volunteers will reduce fear, suspicion and resistance to change. Training should be regarded as an important investment for every organisation as it improves the skills of staff and the quality of service. It is a necessary component of good management and should be provided to all staff, volunteers and participants. Training should be conducted regularly.” - Child Wise Booklet, 12 Steps to Building Child Safe Organisations - [www.childwise.net](http://www.childwise.net)

Develop & implement or outsource training specific to the role in which participants are involved in. Training that is well planned and specific to a person’s position is more likely to have a long lasting and beneficial impact.

All Team Members who are entrusted to work with or have access to children in a ministry or program in your church are required to undertake training specific to the role they are outworking. It will be helpful if you clearly outline in your Duty of Care & Child Protection Policy what level of training is expected and how often it will be required.

Each local church is responsible to determine and tailor segments of training necessary for each Team Member, Team Leader, Ministry Leader or Senior Leadership Team / Church Oversight member within the various ministry areas they are involved.

Specifically:

1. All Parents/Carers of children and young people should be encouraged to inform their children/young people about personal safety
2. Staff and volunteers should be provided with a copy of your church's **Duty of Care & Child Protection Policy** prior to commencing work with / having access to children or young people in any ministry/program of your church. They should also be trained on key elements of your policy including mandatory reporting, CRC best practice requirements, appropriate ways of relating and responding to children
3. Ministry Leaders and Team Leaders need to be trained on proper observation and ongoing screening of staff and volunteer performance to insure ongoing stability within all programs. They also need to be made aware of which Senior Leadership Team Members they are to approach to raise any concerns and be trained on what practical responsibilities they are to outwork when leading a Children's or Youth ministry/program/event/activity.
4. Senior Leadership Team Members and Church Oversight Members should be trained in how to manage allegations of abuse and how to implement & train Ministry Leaders/Team Leaders to outwork your church's critical incident plan if required.

It's important that staff and volunteers working with or having access to children and youth understand your church's responsibility to build a create child safe culture. Provide training at regularly set intervals. Develop refresher programs for updating topics which have been previously trained. This ensures all Team Members keep up to date with current child safe practices required. Training can be conducted in face to face small or large group sessions or be made available as an online module. Recognised prior learning can be given to those who have completed mandatory notification training as part of their education / health professional role (with a copy of the relevant certificate stored securely for your church records).

Training should be completed soon after the endorsement and commencement of each new role. It is the responsibility of your church to determine the specific timeframe for training to be completed.

Ministry Leaders should be required to complete a higher level of training in order to have specific insight into the various levels of training needed by each member of their team(s).

Face to face training can take place in large group settings combined with another church, or, at a specific time set aside within your church or ministry department(s) or with a small group of individual Team Members.

## Step 11 - Empower Children/Young People & Encourage Their Participation in Creating a Child Safe Culture

Abuse is more common in organisations where children have no voice. To be child safe your church needs to empower children so they can speak their concerns. In building and maintaining a child safe environment it's vital to include and value the unique knowledge and experience of children and young people. Children and young people can identify strengths, weaknesses, risks and dangers in activities that may otherwise go undetected. Children's participation can mean that more risks are identified, the open and aware culture is expanded, and children feel safe to report abuse.

If children are consulted in decision making around your child protection policies and strategies they:

- Will be more committed to the policies and procedures
- Will gain a greater understanding of policies and procedures
- Will gain skills to speak up for themselves
- Will be better able to recognise dangers and risks and seek support and assistance.

So get their best thoughts, ask their opinions, get them involved and keep listening to their feedback.

## Step 12 – Utilise (or develop) a system to track endorsements & training progress

If called to answer allegations of misconduct within the church, the best defence will be the documentation that can be provided to show that every reasonable step that could be taken to prevent misconduct within the church has been taken.

Each church should utilise or develop some form of database that will allow a delegated person(s) appointed by your Church Oversight to track the endorsement and training of all staff and volunteers and give regular reports on progress made or areas of concern. There should be no Team Members who are considered exceptions to your church's screening & endorsement process.

Resource Links:



ChildSafe is a safety management system. People with different levels of responsibility access the various elements of our system to work safely with children and young people.

The three key elements are:

1. ChildSafe Standards provided in our [publications](#).
2. Training materials included in the publications and as online training.
3. Access to [Safety Management Online](#) for people at each level

For more information go to: <http://www.childsafe.org.au/why-consider-childsafe/>

## Summary of online resources

All these resources can be downloaded in word and/or pdf format from the CRC website; [crcchurches.org/docresources](http://crcchurches.org/docresources)

### A. Sample Referee Questionnaire 88

This questionnaire is useful for phone interviews/emailing referees as part of the church's screening process. It is a helpful tool in determining if an applicant is suitable to work with /have access to children or young people as part of your church ministries/programs.

### B. Team Member Application Form

This form should be completed by all staff / volunteers who are applying to work directly or have access to children and youth in a program or ministry of your church. All Team Members should receive official Church Oversight endorsement prior to commencing work or having access to children or youth participants in any of your church's ministry/program.

### C. Commonwealth of Australia Statute Declaration & List of Authorised Witnesses

Your Church Oversight may choose to ask Team Members (staff & volunteers) who are applying to work with or have access to children / youth as part of your church to sign a Commonwealth Statutory Declaration. This document must be signed by an authorised witness. A list of persons who are authorised to witness Commonwealth Stat Declarations is included.

### D. U18 Medical Information Form

A medical information form should be completed for each child or young person under 18 involved as a participant in a ministry or program. A specific medical information form must be filled out for each extended activity, e.g., camp, hike, outreach trip.

### E. Consent to Photograph Form

This form should be completed for each child or young person *prior* to the use of any photograph, digital image or recording of that child/young person in any publications, multi-media presentations or websites belonging to your church. For all ministries/programs with children or youth participants a *Consent to Photograph* form should be completed for each child or young person at the beginning of each year (annually).

### F. Sample Annual Off-Site Activity Consent Form

An annual consent form should be completed for each child or young person that could be involved in off-site activities, at the beginning of each year's program.

### G. Sample Extended Activity Offsite Consent Form

A specific notice & consent form should be completed by participants before any extended off-site activities such as camps or trips Each extended activity offsite notice & consent form should be adapted to include information for Parents/Carers about the activity, date, time the activity commences and concludes, transport arrangements, pick-up and drop-off information, emergency contact information, supervision and permission to seek medical attention if required.

### H. Accident & Incident Report Form

This form should to be completed and handed into a Ministry Leader if:

- An accident occurs requiring the injured party to see a medical practitioner or first aid personnel.
- An incident occurs that may require an appropriate response from your local Leadership Team, such as physical safety issues, Team Leader or Team Member conduct or inadequate procedures.

### I. First Aid Treatment Form

Administration of first aid should only be carried out by a person with a current First Aid Certificate; a medical doctor or a registered nurse. If no suitably trained person is available to administer first aid, outside medical treatment should be sought and in the case of an emergency, an ambulance called. The purpose of this form is to record each and every first aid treatment administered at your church.

### J. Driver Declaration Form

Any person designated to transport under 18 participants as part of a ministry program at your church should be required to complete this form. This will allow your church to document that Team Leaders have exercised reasonable care in asking responsible adult drivers to undertake the transportation of participants and ensure designated drivers understand what is required of them.

- K. Sample Emergency Contact Details Sheet
- L. Sample Sign in / Sign Out Sheet (for Children's Ministry Program)
- M. Sample Critical Incident Details Form
- N. Sample Driver & Vehicle Registration Summary
- O. Team Member (18+) Medical Information Form
- P. Web Resources & References
- Q. References

*“But when adults speak up for the vulnerable and the weak, working and demanding that safety and respect prevail, God's little lambs are protected and nourished. They know they are not abandoned; they are loved. And the world becomes a little more like heaven as a result.”*

— Dr. [Wess Stafford](#)

*Dr Wess Stafford: Former CEO of Compassion International & author of Too Small to Ignore: Why the Least of These Matter Most and; Just One Minute: In the Heart of a Child One Moment Can Last Forever.*