

CHILD SAFETY AND SAFE CHURCH

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Mildura Baptist Church is committed to creating a child safe environment. Children are created in the image of God and thereby precious. We desire that they would have every opportunity to come to Jesus and see Him as a loving Saviour and Father. We recognize that oppression and abuse is not honouring to how God made them or to what God expects of us. Their physical, emotional and spiritual welfare is our concern.

GOOD PRACTICE AND CONDUCT

It is important that all people working with children and vulnerable others are clear about acceptable and unacceptable practices. Many of these expectations are wise and careful steps to avoid compromising or problematic situations. The standards apply to all those that work with children or lead children indirectly, including employees and volunteers.

APPROPRIATE STANDARDS

- Do my best to responsibly and safely supervise those under my care.
- Communicate appropriately
- Treat children equally, without preference or bias towards ethnicity, religion, or sex
- Avoid all unnecessary physical contact (recognizing that unnecessary contact may adapt according to the age of the child – what may be necessary contact with a toddler may not be necessary for a teen).
- If physical contact is required (eg extreme distress, physical injury, nature of activity), any and all contact is open, non-secretive, minimal, and only in response to need (seeking permission where appropriate).
- Make all efforts to keep interactions public and accessible.
- Responsibly report concerns and practice appropriate duty of care.

INAPPROPRIATE STANDARDS

- Any forms of harassment, bullying, discrimination or intimidation.
- Flirtatious behaviour and/or communication.
- Inappropriate physical contact (eg. hugging, massaging, wrestling, tickling or play fighting especially with the opposite sex), including violent and physically harming actions.
- Any contact or actions of a sexual nature.
- Being alone with a child or vulnerable person unnecessarily and without the prior knowledge of others – especially with those of the opposite sex.

MANDATORY REPORTING AND DUTY OF CARE

FAILURE TO DISCLOSE

Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 must report that information to Victoria Police. It is a criminal offence to fail to disclose that information to Victoria Police.

Reasonable Belief is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. 'Reasonable belief' might be formed when:

- A child states they have been sexually abused
- A child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused
- Someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused
- Professional observations of a child's behavior or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually abused
- Signs of sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

It is a reasonable excuse not to disclose where a person believes on reasonable grounds that the information has already been disclosed to police and they have no further information to add.

FAILURE TO PROTECT

If you are a staff member in a position of authority, and you become aware that an adult associated with your organization (such as a worker or volunteer) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child who is under the care, authority or supervision of the organization, you must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce the risk. If you fail to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence what is neglect

REPORTABLE CONDUCT

And suspected criminal behavior should be reported to police.

Reportable conduct includes:

- Sexual offenses (against, with, or in the presence of a child)
 - Sexual assault
 - Indecent acts
 - Possession of child abuse material
 - 'grooming' a child in order to commit a sexual offense
- Sexual misconduct (against, with, or in the presence of a child)
- Physical violence (against, with or in the presence of a child)
 - Actual physical violence where an intentional or reckless use of force which has the ability to cause injury or harm – eg. hitting, punching, kicking, pushing, throwing something at the child.
 - Apprehended physical violence where intentional or reckless behaviour causes a child to think that physical force is about to be used against them or someone else.
- Behavior that is likely to cause significant emotional or psychological harm to a child

- Verbal abuse
- Coercive or manipulative behaviour
- Hostility towards or rejection of the child
- Humiliation, belittling or scapegoating

A clear link must exist between the behaviour and 'significant' harm

- Significant neglect of a child.
 - Significant, deliberate, or reckless failure to meet the basic needs of a child in circumstances where the adult understood the needs of the child. This may include supervisory, physical, educational or emotional neglect.

NOTE: a child is anyone who is under 18 years of age.

REASONABLE BELIEF

A reportable allegation is made where a person makes an allegation, based on reasonable belief, that a worker or volunteer has committed reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct. A reasonable belief is more than suspicion. There must be some objective basis for the belief. However, it is not the same as having proof and does not require certainty.

Examples may include:

- Observed the conduct themselves
- Heard directly from a child that the conduct occurred
- Received information from another credible source [eg first-hand witness]

HANDLING ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

Where reasonable belief of a reportable conduct exists, an allegation should be made.

Allegations of abuse should be directed towards the 'Head of Organization'. This should include a written record of the allegation [see appendix I]. Typically, this would be the church secretary, alternatively the church pastor. This person is then legally responsible for reporting allegations of abuse to the 'Commission for Children and Young People', in addition to police and DHHS.

When the head of organization is made aware of an allegation of abuse, they will immediately [within 24 hours] contact the BUV for further guidance, advice, and reporting steps. If the allegation is a 'reportable conduct', it must be reported to the appropriate legal authorities.

APPENDIX I

MILDURA BAPTIST CHURCH -- CONFIDENTIAL

SAFE CHURCH CONCERN FORM

In the event of an allegation or report being received about potential or actual harm to a child or other vulnerable person, this form should be completed and given to your Safe Church Concerns Person, who will follow up as appropriate. This document should be kept securely for 45 years. Do not discuss your concern with anyone other than the Safe Church Concerns Person, unless instructed to do so.

If there is immediate danger, call Police (000).

DETAILS OF THE VICTIM:

Name DOB/Age
Address Postcode
Email Phone

DETAILS OF THE ALLEGED PERPETRATOR (THE PERSON ABOUT WHOM THE ALLEGATION HAS BEEN MADE):

Name DOB/Age
Position Held in church:
Address Postcode
Email Phone

HAS ANY OTHER PERSON OR ORGANISATION (POLICE, CHILD PROTECTION, CCYP) BEEN NOTIFIED?

YES/NO (circle)

Officer's name (if known):

Time/Date:

If not, reason

ANY SPECIFIC ALLEGATIONS MADE BY THE VICTIM? (IN BRIEF; USING THEIR EXACT WORDS IF POSSIBLE)

1.

2.

3.

PLEASE PROVIDE BRIEF DETAILS OF THE BEHAVIOUR OBSERVED OR OTHER REASONS YOU HAVE CONCERNS OF ABUSE/NEGLECT, SUCH AS WHEN, WHERE, WHO, HOW AND ANY OTHER POSSIBLE WITNESSES OR PERSONS INVOLVED OR WHO COULD BE AFFECTED. (ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEET IF NECESSARY)

ANY FURTHER DETAILS: (ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY)

DETAILS OF THE PERSON COMPLETING THIS FORM:

Name Role:
Address Postcode
Email Phone
Signature: DATE:

DETAILS OF THE PERSON RECEIVING THIS FORM:

Name Role:
Address Postcode
Email Phone
Signature: DATE:

APPENDIX II

REFERENCE AND RESOURCES

BAPTIST UNION OF VICOTRIA -- BUV.COM.AU

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES -- DHHS.VIC.GOV.AU

1300 664 977

Call 000 in all urgent matters

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE -- CCYP.VIC.GOV.AU