



## Child Protection Policy and Procedures

### General Purpose Statement

Marsfield Community Church (MCC) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of MCC from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our workers from false accusations.

When Jesus uttered his beautiful words, 'let the children come to me and do not hinder them' (Matt 19:14) he set the benchmark for us. MCC seeks to protect children, our workers, the gospel and our reputation in the community that we seek to serve.

This policy seeks to fulfil the *10 Child Safe Standards* recommended by the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* dated December 2017.

MCC welcomes your input/feedback on our child safety approach, policy and procedures from the church community and families.

### Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

The term "worker" includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children at MCC in any capacity.

## 1. Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) **Six Month Rule**

No person will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with MCC for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b) **Written Application**

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the Marsfield Community Church.

c) **Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

d) **Reference Checks**

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references may be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past if possible. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at MCC.

e) **Working With Children Check (WWCC)**

Anyone at MCC (full-time, part-time or unpaid) in a position of child-related work must complete the Volunteer Declaration Form and complete a *Working With Children Check* (which includes a *National Police Check*). The *Working With Children Check* (WWCC) number must then be provided to the Kids Church Coordinator.

*NB: The NSW guidelines for the Working with Children Check (WWCC) stipulate that the position does not need to be a paid position in order to warrant the WWCC being carried out.*

See <http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/working-with-children-check>

f) **Once employed**

All people involved in any form of children's ministry at MCC must:

- complete the *Safe Ministry Training* initial workshop or equivalent within 3 months of commencing involvement in children's ministry. This workshop consists of two parts: Part A (Leading children and youth) and Part B (Protecting children and youth). Each part goes for 2 hours and can be done back-to-back or at separate times. They are run by *Anglican Youthworks* at a cost of \$30 per person (total for both parts).
- complete a safe ministry refresher course every 3 years. These are offered by *Anglican Youthworks* (or equivalent) at a cost of \$25 per person and take two hours.

## 2. Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

### 3. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at this church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Lead Pastor or a member of the Leadership Team for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at this church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

- The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
- The worker or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
- All allegations of abuse should be reported to the civil authorities, and the organization will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The organization will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
- The insurance company will be notified, and the organization will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
- The organization will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of the organization should refrain from speaking to the media.

- A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.

Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

#### **4. Open Door Policy**

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

#### **5. Teenage Workers**

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or unpaid) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 14.
- Must be screened as specified above.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

#### **6. Check-in/Check-out Procedure**

For all children a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent, guardian or designated person. The parent, guardian or designated person must then subsequently sign out the child from our care. In the event that a parent, guardian or designated person is unable to sign out the child the Kids Church Coordinator will be contacted. She/he will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of an appropriate person after discussing the surrounding circumstances with them.

In the case of youth attending MCC groups/events, the above check-in/check-out may not apply as they may arrive/leave without parent, guardian or designated person sign-in.

#### **7. Sick Child Policy**

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diahorrea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours;
- Green or yellow runny nose;
- Eye or skin infections; and/or
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent, guardian or designated person will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

### *Medications Policy*

It is the policy of MCC not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications (including aspirin, Panadol or similar) to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the Kids Church Coordinator to develop a plan of action.

## **8. Discipline Policy**

It is the policy of MCC not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the Kids Church Coordinator if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

## **9. Restroom Guidelines**

- In the situation where children are unable to toilet themselves, or are in nappies, parents will be contacted by text message to come and toilet their children if available.
- Alternatively, children five years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom if one is available.
- If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.
- For children over the age of five, two leaders (at least one male) should take boys to the restroom and two leaders (at least one female) should take girls. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.
- For youth, over the age of 14 years, it may be appropriate for them to toilet independently of adult supervision.

For the protection of all, single workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

## **10. Accidental Injuries to Children**

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. *For minor injuries*, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. *For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid*, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

## **11. Training**

MCC will provide training on this child protection policy to all new child workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All child workers are strongly encouraged to attend these trainings.

***This Policy and Procedures were adopted for use by the Marsfield Community Church Leadership Team on 27/8/20.***

***Last updated 27/8/20***