



Policy and Procedures Introductory Training

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1. Forward

The following training document summarizes all Policy & Procedures Thrive Church requires volunteers to have basic knowledge of.

2. TH1000 Safe Church Policy & Procedures

Thrive Church affirm that 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.

God calls his body to minister to vulnerable people. God identified classes of vulnerable people who were to be protected and given special care and treatment in society because of their powerlessness (Exodus 22:21-22, Deuteronomy 10:17-19, Jeremiah 22:2-4, James 1:27). Our policy has been developed to help us live out our Biblical mandate and our responsibilities under Australian legislation.

Our Policy Aims To

1. Minimize the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of positional power.
2. Ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and ministry misconduct are handled thoroughly.
3. Ensure leaders comply and programs are safe for all participants.
4. Ensure that all people are respected and valued.

We Commit To

1. Safe recruitment of leaders.
 - 1.1. We will screen all prospective leaders in our ministries, before they are appointed. (ie. relevant Working With Children's check, criminal history / Police Check as appropriate and a Safe Ministry Check questionnaire).
 - 1.2. We will have a minimum church attendance policy of 6 months for all prospective volunteer leaders.
2. Adequate training of leaders.
 - 2.1. We require that all leaders with ministry responsibility for children or young people attend a Creating Safe Spaces (or SCTA endorsed) Awareness workshop within their first 6 months of ministry and attend a refresher workshop every 3 years.
 - 2.2. We require all leaders to attend additional ministry-specific training as required.
3. Continued supervision of leaders.
 - 3.1. We commit to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for leaders.
 - 3.2. All leaders will agree to follow our Volunteer and Leader's Code of Conduct.
4. Responding to allegations of risk of harm (abuse) and serious ministry misconduct.
 - 4.1. All leaders will report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, according to our church procedures
 - 4.2. Where a leader has an allegation of ministry misconduct made against them we will provide support to alleged victims and perpetrators and seek appropriate denominational help from the Baptist Association Ministry Standards Manager on 1300 647 780 for a just and fair resolution.
5. Safe environments in our ministry programs.
 - 5.1. We will serve participants as servants of Christ, commit to the good news of Jesus and lead in spiritually non-abusive ways.

- 5.2. We will afford participants a 'say' in the programs and the activities in which they participate by; fostering and valuing their ideas, and encouraging participation.
- 5.3. We will obtain appropriate information relating to the program participants, including children's health, to ensure that we are able to care for their needs.
- 5.4. All leaders will discharge their duty of care through the use of forms, checklists and templates for establishment and maintenance of safe environments in our church.
- 5.5. A Safety Person/Team will be appointed to establish and maintain: WHS, fire safety, building safety, first aid, food safety, safe transport, incident and emergency procedures, and implement the approval for ministry process.

3. TH1001_Volunteers & Leaders Code of Conduct

Background

This Leaders' Code of Conduct (code) outlines ministry appropriate boundaries, rather than assuming that people know the boundaries. It applies to all church leaders/workers - both volunteer and paid.

As the leaders of this church we acknowledge that everyone who attends our church needs to be confident that they will be cared for, nurtured and encouraged as they grow and at the same time, protected from spiritual, physical, & emotional harm. Therefore we commit to the following:

Ministry Standards

We minister out of a 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.

We serve others in the context of healthy relationships by:

- loving and caring for our families; paying attention to the effect of ministry on them.
- treating others with respect; teach and exercise authority respectfully.
- upholding confidentiality; do not disclose to anyone (including spouse), any confidential information without the consent of the person providing the information. (There is an exception where there is a legal obligation or a duty of care issue.)
- being a team player; cooperating with other ministry leaders, there will be areas that overlap and someone else may have the advice that you need.
- using words that build up; do not ridicule or embarrass people.
- avoiding ongoing counselling of people with whom we have pastoral (ministry) relationships.
- making alternative arrangements for pastoral ministry for any person with whom we may develop an appropriate romantic relationship.

As Christian Leaders we will:

- be accountable to our team, watch out for each other and protect each other's integrity, e.g. never alone with one child or vulnerable adult.
- act in the best interests of those we serve.
- report our concerns about serious misconduct and/or abuse according to church procedure.
- treat every program participant equally, 'no favourites'.
- communicate with integrity, including accountable and wise use of electronic communication.
- acknowledge when we are out of our depth, do not possess the required skill set in difficult pastoral situations, such as helping a victim of abuse, or a person who needs professional counselling, and seek help from a supervisor or denominational leader.
- not take property belonging to others, including intellectual property (copyright)
- not knowingly making false, misleading, deceptive, or defamatory statements.
- not engage in bullying, emotional abuse, harassment, physical abuse, sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, sexual grooming or spiritual abuse of any person, including your own family.
- not act violently or intentionally provoke violence when engaged in civil disobedience.
- be responsible in our use of addictive substances and services (e.g. prescriptions/ alcohol).

- not use any prohibited substance.
- act with sexual purity. Sexuality is a gift from God. We will express our sexuality in healthy and God directed ways. For example; sexual intimacy within the confines of the marriage relationship, do not view pornography and romantic interactions will be meaningfully consensual with power imbalances transparently managed.
- act with financial integrity, including having accountable and transparent systems in place for financial matters.
- not seek personal advantage or financial gain from your position, other than in wages, recognised allowances and deductions.
- disclose to the church leadership if we are or have been investigated for any criminal offences or have any knowledge of serious criminal activity.

When the Code is Breached

Minor

Everyone is capable of sin but can repent and be forgiven (1 John 1:8-9). It stands to reason then, that the code can be breached. 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 or supervisor about receiving help (eg. counselling). In some cases it may be necessary to step a person aside from their duties whilst this takes place. It is crucial to deal with such matters confidentially and sensitively.

Unknown

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

Constant

There are breaches that are not a breach of civil or criminal law, but still unacceptable behaviour in a ministry context. Where a leader has been made aware of their behaviour and yet refuses to change:

1. the ministry coordinator meets with the person for behaviour review meetings. Communicate required behaviour change (no more than 3 meetings).
2. If behaviour continues, a small group of church leaders are to arrange a meeting to address the behaviour. Stepping aside is appropriate at this point.
3. If the behaviour/s 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 counselling if they are willing.

NB. Written notes of all meetings to be carefully taken and a copy given to all parties.

Breaches of the law or allegations of abuse

Allegations of abuse or serious misconduct are to be referred to the appropriate government authorities, in line with Baptist Association processes.

4. TH1003_Pastors Code of Ethics & Conduct

Ref actual document

5. TH1006_Safe Ministry Check

Please circle 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 if necessary. NOTE: A 'yes' answer will not automatically rule an applicant out of selection.

1. Do you have any health problem(s), which may affect you volunteering for the church? Yes / No
2. Have you ever been charged with and/or convicted of a criminal offence? Yes / No
3. As an adult (18 yrs) have you ever engaged in any of the following conduct:
 - sexual contact with someone under your care other than your spouse (such as a parishioner, client, patient, student, employee or subordinate) Yes / No
 - sexual contact with a person under the age of consent Yes / No
 - illegal use, production, sale or distribution of pornographic materials Yes / No
 - conduct likely to cause harm to people, or to put them at risk of harm Yes / No
4. Have you done anything in the past or present that may result in allegations being made against you of abuse?
Abuse means: bullying; emotional abuse; harassment; neglect; physical abuse; or sexual abuse against a child or an adult.
Yes / No
5. To your knowledge, have you ever been the subject of an allegation of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct? Yes / No
6. 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?
Yes / No
7. 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?
Yes / No
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?
Yes / No
9. Has your driver's licence ever been revoked or suspended?
Yes / No
10. Have you a history of alcohol abuse or a history of substance abuse including prescription, over-the-counter, recreational or illegal drugs?
Yes / No

RECORD OF CHRISTIAN CHURCH MEMBERSHIP (if in the congregation less than 3 years)

List church organisations, churches, congregations with which you have been associated (attach

page if necessary): Name of church	Location
When(Month/Year)	Positions held

CHARACTER REFERENCES (If you have been at your church less than 3 years)

Please provide two referees.

Referees must be over eighteen years of age and be able to give a report (by telephone only) on your good character and suitability for ministry.

Referee 1

Name: Phone:
.....

State your relationship with this person:

..... Referee 1

Name: Phone:
.....

State your relationship with this person:

..... CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECK

AND/OR WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK

I hereby consent to an Australian Federal Police Check if one is considered necessary for my role. Working with Children Check number (WWVP in the ACT) for verification when necessary for my role

NUMBER_____Verification Date:_CONSENT TO HOLD INFORMATION

I consent to the information contained in this application including the subsequent pages to be kept by our church. I understand that this information will be kept in a confidential file and used only for screening and disciplinary purposes.

DECLARATION

I,

..... of

.....

Do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

1. The information I have provided in this application and the information contained in any documents accompanying this application are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.
2. I understand that any material misstatement in or omission from this questionnaire may render me unfit to hold a particular or any office in the church.
3. I have received a copy of the Code of Conduct relevant to my role, and I agree to uphold it.

6. TH1004 Safe Church Concerns Form



TH1004 Safe Church Concerns Form

The completed form should be given to a member of your Safe Church Team who will follow the *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*.

This documentation is to be kept in a locked filing cabinet and/or in secure electronic format for at least 45 years from the date of completion.

Please do not discuss the concern with anyone other than the Safe Church Team or your Ministry Team Leader.

If there is immediate danger please contact police immediately.

Church Name: Thrive Church

DETAILS ABOUT PERSON COMPLETING THIS FORM (either the victim, the person bringing a concern, or the safe church team)	
Name:	
Role:	
Relationship to the victim and/or the person allegedly causing harm:	
Address:	
Email	
Phone:	

DETAILS OF ALLEGED VICTIM (if applicable)		
Name:		
Date of Birth:	Age:	Gender:
Address:		
Parent/guardian name and contact phone number:		

DETAILS OF THE PERSON AGAINST WHOM THE ALLEGATION HAS BEEN MADE (if applicable)	
Name	
Date of birth if known otherwise approximate age:	
Home address:	
Email	
Phone:	

Position/title at time of allegation (if any):
Is the person aware of the existence of the allegations? Yes / No

NATURE OF THE ALLEGATION

Provide details of the allegations that were made known to you – what has been alleged, when it was alleged to have occurred, other relevant details (if necessary use additional page/s and attach to this form).

Are there additional pages attached to this form? Yes / No Number of pages:

Names and contact details of any witness/es:

Have written accounts from witnesses been attached? Yes No If yes, number of pages
(written accounts should be received from each person who received a disclosure or observed a concern, however, do not start an investigation at this stage)

19. Who else knows about the alleged abuse?

Signature (of person bringing concern):	Date:
	

Part two - Safe Church Team to complete the following information

In NSW, Mandatory Reporter Guide completed? Yes / No
 If yes, please attach report printout

Other government agencies or departments involved:

Agency	Date	Reference/Event Number	Name of contact
Police			
DCJ (FaCS)/ CYPS			
OCG/Ombudsman			

Contact with Ministry Standards Hotline 1300 647 780

Date and time:

Emailed copy of Safe Church Concerns Form to standards@nswactbaptists.org.au

Date and time:

Safe Church Team provides feedback to the person bringing the concern about church response and any reports made. (include tick box and date and time) : Yes / No

Signature of Safe Church Team Member	Date:
	

7. TH1012_Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns

Purpose

The ***Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*** (*the Procedure*) sets out a procedure to follow when a complaint or information about any form of child protection concern is received. In NSW this includes a Child Abuse Offence, Child Sexual Abuse, Sexual Misconduct involving a Child, or that a child is at Risk of Significant Harm.

The Church and its staff and volunteers have legal obligations to report certain information to government authorities, this includes duties under the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW), *Ombudsman Act 1974* (NSW), *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW) and the *Children's Guardian Act 2019*.

Some of these duties apply to the church as an organisation or to church leaders, some of the duties apply to individuals. In some circumstances, failing to report knowledge of child abuse incidents to NSW Police may be a criminal offence. Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT have developed this ***Procedure*** to address all relevant duties in a way that is both thorough and practical.

Scope

This Procedure applies to all staff and volunteers of the Church.

If you have any doubt as to whether a complaint or information would fall within the scope of the Procedure, or about any of the steps set out in the Procedure, contact the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Ministry Standards Manager (1300 647 780).

The Procedure should be read in conjunction with the TH1000 *Safe Church Policy* and:

- *TH1002 Procedure for Handling Allegations*
- *TH1004 Safe Church Concerns Form*

1. Receiving a complaint or identifying a child protection concern

A child protection concern may include concerns regarding:

- a child at Risk of Significant Harm
- a Child Abuse Offence,
- Child Sexual Abuse,
- Sexual Misconduct involving a child,
- Physical abuse of a child,
- Serious neglect of a child,
- Behaviour which may psychologically harm the child
- Inappropriately personal or intimate communication and/or behaviours which may constitute grooming
- Exposure of a child to Domestic and Family Violence
- or any other reason for concern.

A child protection concern may be received:

- from a child who has been directly involved;
- from an adult who has been directly involved (including personal disclosures of wrongdoing);
- from another person with information about a child or adult;
- from another organisation with information about a child or adult;
- from staff or volunteers who have concerns based on their observations and interactions with one or more children or adults.

If someone raises a concern or reports an allegation:

- DON'T promise not to report the information
- DON'T ask leading questions
- DON'T attempt to assess the validity of the concern, or seek to investigate any allegation yourself
- DO clarify information reported to you if appropriate (for example, 'Can you tell me more about that?')
- DO assure the person that appropriate action will be taken
- if a child, DO reassure them that they are not at fault and that they will not be in trouble for sharing this information

If a staff member or volunteer has a concern about a child's wellbeing but have not received any specific information they may report the concern using the *Safe Church Concerns Form*.

2. Consider whether there is an immediate danger to a child

Where there is an **immediate** danger to a child

- contact the Police immediately on (131 444 or 000) and report the information;
- follow any instructions given by the Police;
- address any immediate safety needs of others present; and
- organise support for the person who has disclosed the complaint or information.

3. Internal Reporting

a) Complete Safe Church Concern Form

If a staff member or volunteer has or is notified of a child protection concern they should NOTIFY the Safe Church Team and help complete a *Safe Church Concerns Form* as soon as possible. This form should include relevant details of the concern, contact information, and the signature of the person completing the form.

b) The Safe Church Team

- The Safe Church Team is responsible for ensuring the church fulfils it's legal obligations and ensuring that all concerns are managed appropriately.
- If there is any delay before the Safe Church Team can be contacted, the individual should consider whether it is necessary to report their concerns to external government agencies as outlined in step 4 below. They may contact the Ministry Standards Hotline on 1300 647 780 for advice.
- Staff and volunteers should ensure they do not discuss any concerns raised with the accused person at this point in time. Doing so may impede future investigation processes.
- If the concern raised would create a conflict of interest for a member of the Safe Church Team consider contacting the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Ministry Standards Hotline on 1300 647 780 for advice.

4. External Reporting to Government Agencies

a) Safe Church Team responsibilities

The Safe Church Team should

- complete the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) at <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg>
- ensure all necessary reports are made. Reports to different government agencies is required for different purposes and therefore multiple reports may be required.
- keep detailed contemporaneous notes of all information and steps taken.
- should also follow all relevant steps outlined in the *Procedures for Handling Allegations*.

b) Report Risk of Significant Harm to Department of Communities and Justice (formerly known as FACS or DOCS)

- If the Safe Church Team determine that there is a child at Risk of Significant Harm then they are to make a report as soon as possible to the Child Protection Helpline via 132 111 or an e-report.
- If the MRG results in 'Immediate Report to the Child Protection Helpline', make a report as soon as possible via 132 111 or an e-report.
- The MRG result may suggest other actions be taken. Please contact Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Ministry Standards Hotline on 1300 647 780 if any assistance is required.
- The Safe Church Team should keep a copy of the MRG report for their records.

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

27 Mandatory reporting

(1) This section applies to—

- (a) a person who, in the course of his or her professional work or other paid employment delivers health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services, or law enforcement, wholly or partly, to children, and
- (b) a person who holds a management position in an organisation the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services, or law enforcement, wholly or partly, to children.
- (c) a person in religious ministry, or a person providing religion-based activities to children, and
- (d) a registered psychologist providing a professional service as a psychologist.

(2) If—

- (a) a person to whom this section applies has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm, and
- (b) those grounds arise during the course of or from the person's work, it is the duty of the person to report, as soon as practicable, to the Secretary the name, or a description, of the child and the grounds for suspecting that the child is at risk of significant harm.

23 Child or young person at risk of significant harm

- (1) For the purposes of this Part and Part 3, a child or young person is at risk of significant harm if current concerns exist for the safety, welfare or well-being of the child or young person because of the presence, to a significant extent, of any one or more of the following circumstances—
 - (a) the child's or young person's basic physical or psychological needs are not being met or are at risk of not being met,
 - (b) the parents or other caregivers have not arranged and are unable or unwilling to arrange for the child or young person to receive necessary medical care,
 - (b1) in the case of a child or young person who is required to attend school in accordance with the Education Act 1990—the parents or other caregivers have not arranged and are unable or unwilling to arrange for the child or young person to receive an education in accordance with that Act,
 - (c) the child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, physically or sexually abused or ill-treated,
 - (d) the child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm,
 - (e) a parent or other caregiver has behaved in such a way towards the child or young person that the child or young person has suffered or is at risk of suffering serious psychological harm,
 - (f) the child was the subject of a pre-natal report under section 25 and the birth mother of the child did not engage successfully with support services to eliminate, or minimise to the lowest level reasonably practical, the risk factors that gave rise to the report.
- (2) Any such circumstances may relate to a single act or omission or to a series of acts or omissions.

c) Report Child Abuse Offences to Police

- If the Safe Church Team considers that a Child Abuse Offence may have been committed they must report this to the NSW Police regardless of whether the victim of the alleged abuse wants this report to be made.
- The requirement to report to NSW Police includes both recent incidents and allegations of historic abuse. The Safe Church Team should notify the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Ministry Standards Hotline (1300 647 780) of any allegations of a Child Abuse Offence.
- Failing to Report a Child Abuse Offence to NSW Police without a reasonable excuse may be considered a Concealing Child Abuse Offence which is punishable by up to two years imprisonment.

Concealing Child Abuse (Failure to Report) Offence

If an adult fails to report a Child Abuse Offence to the NSW Police this may constitute a Concealing Child Abuse Offence under s316A of the Crimes Act if they:

- believe, know or reasonably ought to know that a Child Abuse Offence has been committed against another person; and
- believe, know or reasonably ought to know that they have information that might be of material assistance to the NSW Police in securing the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of the person who has committed that offence; and
- do not have a 'reasonable excuse' not to report the information.

Reasonable excuses for not reporting to Police may include

- If you believe (on reasonable grounds) that the information is already known to Police;
- If you have made a Report/ to another government body such as Department of Communities and Justice, Ombudsman or the Office of the Children's Guardian
- If the alleged victim is no longer a child and you have reasonable grounds to believe that the person does not want the information reported to Police;
- If you have reasonable grounds to fear for the safety of the alleged victim or any other person (other than the offender) if the information is reported to Police

d) Report Allegations of Reportable Conduct to the Office of Children's Guardian

Under section 66(2) of the *Children's Guardian Act 2019* churches may nominate a Head of Entity for the purposes of the Reportable Conduct Scheme. The Head of Entity for Thrive Church will be the paid senior pastor or church secretary. The Head of Entity for Thrive Church has chosen to delegate responsibilities under the Reportable Conduct Legislation to the Safe Church Team in accordance with section 65 of the *Children's Guardian Act 2019*.

In the event of receiving any allegations that any staff or volunteer who is required to hold a Working With Children Check has engaged in Reportable Conduct, the Head of Entity must:

- notify the Reportable Conduct Scheme (administered by the Office of the Children's Guardian) as soon as practicable, but within a maximum of 7 days from receiving the complaint or information (see Section 2.2 of the *Procedures for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers*)
- As soon as practicable, conduct an investigation or appoint a suitable person to conduct an investigation regarding the reportable allegation (see Section 6 of the *Procedures for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers*)
- Provide a written "entity report" to the Reportable Conduct Scheme within 30 days of receiving information about the Reportable Allegation (see Section 11 of the *Procedures for Handling Complaints Against Staff and Volunteers*).

Children's Guardian Act 2019

20 Meaning of "reportable conduct"

Reportable conduct means the following conduct, whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the conduct has been commenced or concluded—

- a) a sexual offence,
- b) sexual misconduct,
- c) ill-treatment of a child,
- d) neglect of a child,
- e) an assault against a child,
- f) an offence under section 43B or 316A of the Crimes Act 1900,
- g) behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

5. Accountability Measures

a) Report back to person making initial notification

- As soon as is practicable (no longer than 48 hours after notification), the Safe Church Team must inform the person completing the initial *Safe Church Concerns Form* of what action they have taken including any reports made and the 'report number' for reports to NSW Police or the Child Protection Hotline.
- If the Safe Church Team determines that it is not necessary to make a report to NSW Police, or the Child Protection Hotline, the person who completed the initial *Safe Church Concerns Form* may choose to make a report to NSW Police, or the Child Protection Hotline themselves in order to ensure that they have not breached s316A of the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW), or obligations under the Mandatory Reporting legislation.

b) Report to Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT

If a Child Protection Concern has been reported to any government agency the Safe Church Team should advise the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Ministry Standards Manager via email on standards@nswactbaptists.org.au of the matter for the Association's confidential records, and to seek confirmation that the matter has been managed appropriately.

6. Recordkeeping

The Safe Church Concerns Form, Mandatory Reporters Guide report (if completed) and detailed notes of action taken in relation to any Child Protection Concern must be kept secure for a minimum of 45 years.

7. Advice and Support

If you have questions about whether a report should be made please contact the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Ministry Standards Manager on 1300 647 780 for advice, guidance and support.