



The  
Whitehouse  
Church

**Whitehouse Church Incorporated**

# **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

All workers (pastors, employees and volunteers) of the Whitehouse Church Incorporated who are involved in ministry with children and/ or youth are expected to comply with this policy and associated procedures.

**APPENDIX 'A'** Keeping Children & Young People Safe

**APPENDIX 'B'** Whitehouse Church Child Protection Policy Agreement Form

**APPENDIX 'C'** Person of Concern Agreement

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## **Definitions**

**“WHC”** is Whitehouse Church Incorporated

**“Child abuse”** is any significant conduct towards a child that is or may be detrimental to that child’s physical, mental or emotional wellbeing, and includes neglect of the child.

(Refer to Appendix ‘A’ for further clarification)

**“Child” or “children”** are persons under the age of 18 years at the time of the alleged abuse.

**“Child and Youth Protection Services” or “CYPS”** –

<http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/child-and-youth-protection-services>

Contact details: 1300 556 729, [childprotection@act.gov.au](mailto:childprotection@act.gov.au).

The **“Children’s Ministry Leader”** is the appointed coordinator of Children’s ministry.

The list of **“Committee Members”** is detailed in the Register of Members.

**“Mandatory reporting”** is to be made to the Child and Youth Protection Services whose contact information is detailed above.

**“Education and Care Services National Regulations”** is the legislation governing education and child care providers.

**“Safe Spaces Training”** is a child protection training program offered to churches.

**“Reasonable suspicion” (and including related phrases)** is a slight opinion based on some credible evidence which is more than speculation, but less than a positive belief.

**“Victim”** is a child who is reasonably suspected of being subject to child abuse.

**“Worker”** is a minister, pastor, employee of or volunteer of WHC who is involved in ministry with children.

**“WWCC”** is the relevant state/territory Working with Children Check

## **Part A – Introduction**

### **1. Key principles**

- 1.1 The safety and wellbeing of children is of paramount concern for WHC.
- 1.2 In dealing with child abuse WHC is to put the interests of victims and children above those of the organisation.
- 1.3 If in doubt about any child protection issue workers should always raise concerns with the Children’s Ministry Leader or a Committee Member.
- 1.4 All employees and volunteers of WHC must agree to these policies and child protection procedures.

### **2. Reporting and co-operation with authorities**

- 2.1 Appendix ‘A’ details the conditions under which a report must be made to Care and Protection Services.
- 2.2 Workers are to comply fully with their obligations of mandatory reporting under the Children and Young People Act 2008. It is a criminal offence not to comply with this obligation without a lawful excuse.
- 2.3 In addition to mandatory obligations workers will voluntarily report to Child and Youth Protection Services if any reasonable suspicion of abuse is held.
- 2.4 WHC and workers will responsibly and reasonably co-operate with government law enforcement and child protection agencies.

### **3. What is child abuse?**

- 3.1 The ACT Government has produced a guide for reporting child abuse and neglect in the ACT that defines child abuse and our reporting responsibilities (Appendix ‘A’ – *Keeping Children & Young People Safe*).

## **Part B – Procedure Guide**

### **4. Worker screening and selection processes**

- 4.1 All staff and volunteers working with children must hold a valid Working with Vulnerable People background check and complete the form in Appendix 'B'.
- 4.2 Workers are encouraged to undertake Safe Spaces Training at WHC expense.
- 4.3 Under normal circumstances no individual should be permitted to work in the WHC children's ministry until attending WHC for a period of not less than one (1) year. Special circumstances may apply and include intimate knowledge of an applicant by people within the church or impeccable references from other churches/ organisations.
- 4.4 It is acknowledged that from time to time additional helpers are engaged to provide support at WHC children's ministry programs. This may include parents/ guardians or other people within the church. In these instances, an authorised worker must be in attendance and accompany the unauthorised person at all times.
- 4.5 A register of workers and their WWVP paperwork must be kept by the WHC Committee.

### **5. Care and supervision ratios of workers to children**

- 5.1 WHC is not a childcare facility but we recognise the wisdom of adhering to national standards relating to supervision ratios. The following ratios are from the Education and Care Services National Regulations and are current as of 1 January 2016.

#### **MINIMUM SUPERVISION RATIOS FOR CENTRE BASED CARE:**

Under 24 months of age:                      1 approved worker to every 4 children.

24 months to 35 months of age: 1 approved worker to every 5 children.

36 months up to/ including preschool age: 1 approved worker to every 11 children.

Over preschool age: No nationally mandated ratio. However, the ratio in the Australian Capital Territory is 1 approved worker to every 11 children.

**MINIMUM SUPERVISION RATIOS FOR HOME BASED CARE:**

1 approved worker for every 7 children with no more than four children preschool age or under, including the educator's own children younger than 13 years of age at the residence.

5.2 Notwithstanding these minimum ratios it is recommended that, for children of primary school age or younger, a minimum of two (2) workers be present at all times.

5.3 Decisions regarding appropriate ratios, especially if any lesser ratios are used, are to be made only after conscious and responsible consideration by the Children's Ministry Leader or a member of the WHC Committee that the supervision provided does satisfy our duty of care for the children.

## **6. Check in/ out procedures**

6.1 During meetings held in our normal facilities we do not require the use of a check in and out process. It is however recognised that this procedure should be considered for all meetings outside of our normal facilities.

## **7. Meetings/ locations**

7.1 To ensure that safety and integrity is maintained for all concerned, workers should avoid being alone with children at all times.

7.2 Where there is a perceived risk that a child might falsely allege inappropriate behaviour by a worker, a third person should be present.

## **8. Managing inappropriate behaviours in children**

- 8.1 Workers are to limit themselves to non-confrontational behaviour management strategies such as persuasion, rapport, negotiation, incentives and the threat of parental/ guardian involvement.
- 8.2 If a young child misbehaves within a WHC program or activity, firm but gentle verbal correction which is respectful and age-appropriate should be the first response.
- 8.3 When a child is unresponsive or responds unsatisfactorily to reasonable requests to comply with a standard of behaviour which is respectful to him/ her, or other children, and/ or those supervising, the matter must then be immediately reported to the parent/ guardian.
- 8.4 At no time is physical punishment or verbal intimidation permissible, even with parental/ guardian approval.

## **9. Toileting children**

- 9.1 When a child needs assistance in toileting it is the responsibility of their parent/ guardian to attend the child.

## **10. Inappropriate behaviour of a worker**

- 10.1 Any person who is concerned about the behaviour of any worker must refer the matter to the Children's Ministry Leader or a WHC Committee Member for consideration and intervention which is deemed appropriate.
- 10.2 Any concern that is raised must be brought to the attention of at least 3 WHC Committee Members, or 2 WHC Committee Members and the Children's Ministry Leader.

## **11. Worker responsibilities**

- 11.1 The following list is to be considered alongside the formal obligations detailed in Appendix 'A'.
- 11.2 Workers are to be alert to any indicators of child abuse including:
- When a child says that he/she has been abused;
  - When a child or adult says that he/she knows of a child subject to abuse; or
  - Observations of a child's behaviour, change in behaviour, emotional state and or injuries.
- 11.3 Indicators in many cases overlap and can interrelate to all forms of abuse and neglect. An indicator in isolation does not automatically mean that a child is being abused.
- 11.4 Workers should:
- Listen to the child/young person.
  - Not ask leading questions.
  - Reassure child that you take his or her concerns seriously.
  - Reassure the child that what has happened is not his/her fault.
  - Reassure the child that telling you was the right thing to do.
  - Document in writing the child's disclosure as soon as possible.
  - When documenting the disclosure use the same terminology as the child.
  - Not make promises which cannot be kept, such as confidentiality.
  - Reassure the child that there are people who can help to protect them.
- 11.5 A worker is not an investigator and should not engage in detective work.
- 11.6 Even if the child abuse that is disclosed has ceased, reporting it is still necessary to protect other children from the abuser.

11.7 Where a person 18 years or over discloses that he or she was subject to child abuse while he or she was a child these procedures do not apply, but the person should be encouraged to take appropriate steps about the matter. WHC will also take reasonable steps, including reporting the abuse to police, to protect children who may come into contact with the alleged offender in the future.

## **12. Privacy**

12.1 Personal information and records concerning children must be kept confidential and only disclosed to authorised persons. This includes a child's parents/ guardian, workers (if it is relevant to a child's care and safety) and to relevant authorities, WHC Committee Members and the Children's Ministry Leader.

## **13. Gossip and media considerations**

13.1 A worker is not to inform anyone else of the suspected child abuse without the permission of the WHC Committee. The WHC Committee in consultation with the relevant authorities will determine who else should be informed of it. (There is a danger of defamation liability against the worker if ultimately the allegation cannot be proved).

13.2 No workers are to make any statement to the media about any child abuse encountered in the course of their service with WHC and all inquiries about child abuse from the media are to be referred to the WHC Committee.

13.3 As a part of the WHC commitment to open, accountable and professional responses, the persons authorised to make media comment concerning matters pertaining to alleged breaches of the Child Protection Policy are limited to members of the WHC Committee.

13.4 Workers are not to make any statements about child abuse encountered in the course of their service with WHC to any alleged perpetrator or anyone associated with or representing that alleged perpetrator.

## **PART C – CHILD SAFETY**

### **14. Managing potential child abusers at WHC**

- 14.1 Where a person who is the subject of an unresolved complaint of child abuse; or is reasonably suspected by WHC of having at any time engaged in child abuse; attends at any function controlled by WHC, the church must ensure that the person does not have contact with, or communicate with, any child at that function without adequate supervision.
- 14.2 A known child abuser is not to be permitted to be present at any premises controlled by WHC or to take part in any activity controlled by it except in accordance with the terms of a formal Person of Concern Agreement (refer Appendix 'C') entered into between WHC and that person which ensures the safety and wellbeing of children.
- 14.3 If a known child abuser does not comply with the terms of their Person of Concern Agreement, WHC may exclude that person from all premises controlled by WHC and/ or activities controlled by it.

### **15. Interim measures pending determination of child abuse allegations**

- 15.1 Where a worker is reasonably suspected of child abuse, his or her continued ministry with children will cease until the relevant authorities and the WHC Committee has made a final determination regarding their suitability for service.



**APPENDIX 'C' Person of Concern Agreement**