



Presbyterian Church of Victoria

Safe Church Unit



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Safe Church Refresher Course Information

The material in this document is provided as an alternative to viewing the online Refresher Course presentation

Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to read this material as part of making sure we do all we can in the Presbyterian Church of Victoria (PCV) to make our Church a safer place for everyone.

The Safe Church Policy & Code of Conduct

Please remember that all people who work and serve in the PCV must abide by the Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct, as set by the General Assembly of Victoria. You will recall these documents from the Basic Training - copies are readily available in all PCV congregations and organisations and at www.safechurchpcv.org.au. Please read through these documents every year, as in your church role you serve the Lord *and* you act for the PCV – thank you!

Safe Church Policy, Procedure & Practice Manual

The latest version of the Safe Church Policy, Procedure and Practice Manual is available online, at your church or from your Safe Church Representative. Alternatively, you are welcome to contact the Safe Church Unit for a copy to be mailed to you.

Your Working With Children Check and/or VIT registration

Your WWCC must be kept up to date – please take care to renew your WWCC **before** it expires and update your Safe Church Representative with the details. If you experience difficulty updating or renewing your WWCC, contact the WWCC Customer Line on 1300 652 879, your Safe Church Representative or the Safe Church Unit, so we can discuss how best to support and assist you in doing so.

All people who work and volunteer in the PCV must list both their own church and the Presbyterian Church of Victoria 156 Collins Street, Melbourne 3000 Phone 039650 9311 (i.e. the denomination) as organisations on their WWCC.

Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered teachers must notify Working With Children Check Victoria (via www.service.vic.gov.au/services/teachers-notifications/) of their role with the PCV.

No person may work with children under 18 in any PCV ministry or activity without a current WWCC or VIT registration *or* serve in a role requiring a current WWCC without a current WWCC or VIT registration.

You must notify the PCV if you receive an Interim OR Final Exclusion Notice of your WWCC.

Safe Church Advanced Training

Your role in the church may have changed since completing your Basic Training, to that of a designated senior leader, such as, an elder, bible study leader, pastoral carer/deacon or head of a ministry (i.e. youth group leader or co-ordinator, Sunday School Superintendent, music ministry co-ordinator etc). If this is the case for you, you are required to complete Safe Church Advanced Training. Speak to your Safe Church Representative or contact the Safe Church Unit for scheduled training dates.

Reporting Child Abuse and Reportable Conduct – Victorian legal requirements

The main things to be aware of are:

1. Under the 'Failure to Disclose' legislation it is a crime if you fail to disclose to Victoria Police or Department of Families, Fairness and Housing - Child Protection, a situation where you know or have reasonable belief that a child is being sexually abused.
2. Under the law, as an employee or volunteer in the Church you must report reasonable belief of child physical and sexual abuse under changes to the Victorian Mandatory Reporting laws introduced in September 2019. Contact the SCU with any child abuse concerns or to report.
3. Make sure to contact SCU with any Reportable Conduct Scheme concerns about a volunteer or employee of the Church OR you may report directly to the Commission for Children and Young People – see www.ccyp.vic.gov.au and then contact SCU to report.

Protecting children from abuse in the Church – Victorian legal requirements

In addition to their PCV obligations, leaders in organisations with children, who have authority to reduce or remove a known risk to children's safety from sexual abuse by a person associated with their organisation, will commit the criminal offence of 'Failure to Protect' if they fail to act to reduce or remove the risk. This is especially critical for ministers and elders in the PCV as this affects them as individuals under the law.

The PCV must also have risk management processes in place to protect children from the risk of abuse and misconduct within the Church under the requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme. Contact for SCU assistance in these matters.

The Victorian Child Safe Standards

The Standards are a compulsory framework that supports organisations to promote the safety of children by requiring them to implement policies to prevent, respond to and report allegations of child abuse and harm. In Victoria, the legislation that creates the Standards is the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic). The Standards are designed to drive cultural change and embed a focus on child safety by placing children's rights and wellbeing at the forefront of everything done within an organisation.

The PCV Safe Church programme and the various child safety resources provided to the PCV by the SCU assist the PCV in compliance with the standards. These resources can be accessed at www.safechurchpcv.org.au/resources - there are many helpful resources that can be used in the children's ministries in PCV churches.

SCU is a resource for all people in the PCV to assist in such matters – please do not hesitate to contact SCU for help.

Abuse Disclosure Process

You will remember from the Basic Training that there is an Abuse Disclosure Process to follow should a person, whether an adult or a child, disclose that they are suffering abuse. Always follow the process:

Listen – don't add anything or judge the veracity of the account as this is a matter for others

Support – offer reassurance and care

Document – write down the report as soon as possible afterwards

Report – speak to a senior leader and call the SCU together OR contact the SCU directly OR make a report directly to Victoria Police or Department of Families, Fairness and Housing - Child Protection (if the matter relates to child abuse) and then ALWAYS contact the SCU to inform the Church that a report has been made and to seek help and resources.

SCU is the right place to take these concerns as the SCU acts as a funnel to make sure concerns reach the right place (internally and externally to the PCV) for resolution and also acts as a place of help and resource for the Church.

The T.A.P. Principle

Always practice **Transparency – Accountability – Preparation** as you serve in your role, so together we can further safeguard children and the vulnerable amongst us from abuse and harm in our denomination.

Transparency – we are transparent in how we minister

Accountability – we are accountable to the Lord, each other and any applicable laws in how we minister and respond to abuse related concerns in the Church

Preparation – we do all we can to prepare our ministries in such a way as to prevent abuse occurring in the Church and to know how to respond should we have concerns about abuse

Safe Ministry in leadership and practice

In the church positions of leadership and responsibility also hold the power to influence others for God. In the eyes of those under their authority, leaders may be seen as representing God's authority. Leaders and those with responsible roles in the church must understand that people place high levels of trust in them and also are more likely to accept what they do and say rather than question it. With this trust and authority comes great responsibility to lead and serve in a Christlike way.

Remember

- You must faithfully observe all reasonable directions of the Session/Church in regard to your ministry and this forms part of being accountable in your role
- You must follow the Safe Ministry practices and procedures in your church – if you are not sure about these, speak to the ministry leader and/or Session
- Do not allow yourself to be in any area alone with a child under 18. Always have another team member, leader or the parent with you.
- If a child has questions for you during the ministry events, ask another team member to remain in the room while you talk to them
- There are many resources for you relating to the following material and other relevant ministry practices, located at the website on the Resources page of the Safe Church website (see below)
- If you have any questions or cannot find the ministry practice information you require on the website, please contact the Safe Church Unit for help, via phone or email

Safe Church Ministry Practices – Please contact the Safe Church Unit for paper copies of these resources if you are not online. These can also be accessed via www.safechurchpcv.org.au/resources

Please review this list, then read and action the relevant resource for your role(s) in your church

- [Our Christian Culture of Safeguarding Children](#)
- [Wise Ministry Practices for Working With Children](#)
- [Listening to and Empowering Children and Youth in PCV ministries](#)
- [Child Safe Standard 1 & PCV Ministry to Aboriginal Children](#)
- [Child Safe Ministry to Children with disability](#)
- [We all sit around the same table - ministry to adults and children with disability](#)
- [Questions to ask families and/or carers of children with disability in the church](#)
- [How to develop a ministry for children with disability](#)
- [Supporting children with ADHD in our church](#)
- [Supporting children and people with Autism Spectrum Disorder in our church](#)
- [Supporting children who live with anxiety in our church](#)
- [Supporting children with anxiety and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder through a 'meltdown'](#)
- [Driving in Ministry to Children and Youth](#)
- [Toileting Children Protocol Advice](#)
- [Child Safety Risk Assessment - local church children's ministries](#)
- [Child Safety Risk Assessment - specific activity](#)
- [Supervision of Children Under 18 years - onsite](#)
- [Supervision of Children Under 18 years - camps](#)
- [Preventing bullying at Kids Church](#)
- [Creche Guidelines](#)
- [The Value of Clear Communication](#)
- [Online and Smart Phone Usage Guidelines](#)
- [Your Digital Reputation](#)
- [Visibility in location in ministry](#)
- [Physical Contact](#)
- [Duty of Care and Safe Church PCV](#)
- [First Aid](#)
- [Visiting Ministries Guidelines](#)
- [Junior Leaders](#)

Remember - the Safe Church Unit is a place of reference and resource for you in the Church – please contact the SCU if you have any Safe Church PCV query or concern – Thank you