

Safe Ministries Policy and Procedures
Vision Christian Fellowship
February 2017

1. Introduction

1.1 Policy Statement

Vision Christian Fellowship Inc (VCF), located at 60-62 Gladstone Street Fyshwick, ACT is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for children and vulnerable people.

It is a goal of all VCF ministries to be a safe haven for God's glory.

1.2 Scope

This Safe Ministries Policy and its included Procedures aim to reduce the risk of abuse occurring and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken should abuse occur. This Policy applies to all ministries authorised by or under the control of VCF.

1.3 Authority

These are the Policy and Procedures of VCF and were reviewed and endorsed by its Board and adopted for use on

29th November 2016.

VCF is committed to implementing this Safe Ministries Policy and its included Procedures and to training our leaders in its content and application.

1.4 Definitions

Child: Any person under the age of 18

Vulnerable Adult: someone who is or may be in need of community services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; who is or may be unable to take care of him/herself and unable to protect him/herself against harm or exploitation by another person.

Abuse can consist of one or more of the following:-

Physical Abuse: Any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices including hitting, punching, kicking, shaking, burning, biting, pulling hair, and alcohol or other drug administration.

Sexual Abuse: Any sexual act or threat to perform such upon another person. It occurs when a person uses their power and authority to take advantage of another's trust to involve them in sexual activity. It does not necessarily involve genital contact, but is the act which erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear consensual, but the validity is negated by the power differential.

Emotional Abuse: The chronic attitude or behaviour of one person which is directed at another person or the creation of an emotional environment which erodes development, self esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or chronic or extreme domestic violence in another person's presence.

Neglect: Characterised by the failure to provide for a person's basic needs, which jeopardises or impairs a person's development.

Helpers: Any non-paid person 16 years and over who is invited by a ministry leader to assist them in ministry, including parent helpers whose children are participating in the ministry activity.

Ministry Leader: Any person (paid or unpaid) over the age of 18 who is recognised and authorised by pastoral staff as the leader of a key ministry area.

Team Members: Any person (paid or unpaid) over the age of 18 who is responsible for the control and safety of people placed in their care having been appointed by pastoral staff to a position in a key ministry area of VCF.

Key Ministry Area: Any organised activity that is authorised by VCF. Includes but is not limited to Youth Group, Sunday School groups and crèche, Scripture in Schools, Alpha Course and Transformation Prayer Ministry (TPM).

Pastoral Staff: Pastors employed by VCF.

Volunteers: A collective term for all unpaid people in roles as helpers, team members or ministry leaders.

2. Policy Review

This Safe Ministries Policy and its included Procedures will be reviewed annually at a VCF Board meeting.

3. Obligations

3.1 Spiritual

The core beliefs of VCF require that all people are treated with love and dignity. All are to be cared for, particularly those who are vulnerable and in need of nurture and protection.

3.2 Legal

VCF staff and volunteers are subject to the Federal and State legislations and principles established through common law.

3.3 Ethical

Some actions may not be regarded as abuse, but are unacceptable behaviour for staff and volunteers of VCF. These include:

- Inappropriate conversation of a sexual or offensive nature
- Coarse language, especially of a sexual nature
- Suggestive gestures and/or remarks
- Joke of a sexual nature
- Inappropriate touching
- Inappropriate literature and digital media (eg. M, MA, R or X rated material used with children, and may include PG depending on the age of the child)
- Recording or filming without prior consent

- Acts of violence committed by staff or volunteers in the course of a church activity.

The age of the individual is recognised as one of the determinants in deciding what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Ministry leaders will ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained at all times.

4. Selection and Screening

Staff and volunteers involved in any activity with children or vulnerable adults with VCF must be carefully selected and screened. Prior to people commencing as volunteers in a key ministry area involving children or vulnerable adults, the following precautions will be taken:

- Volunteer ministry leaders and team members will have attended VCF on a regular basis for not less than 6 months.
- All ministry leader and team appointments will be screened by pastoral staff for suitability; considering faith journey, character and skills. This process will include contacting two referees supplied by the candidate.
- Volunteers serving in a VCF ministry involving children and/or vulnerable people will annually complete a Safe Ministries Check form.
- An up to date Working with Vulnerable People card (ACT) which complies with legislative requirements of the ACT will be required, sighted and a scanned copy taken prior to the **ministry leader, team member or helper** commencing their proposed role. In the case of Special Religious Education in NSW schools, a Working with Children Clearance Check (WWCC) is necessary. Scanned copies of WWVP cards will be held on a secure database, and the Working with Children's Check number registered with the NSW Office of Children's Guardians where necessary.
- All helpers providing assistance in children's ministry must be fully supervised at all times by an appointed team member or ministry leader.
- Where VCF has identified that a potential volunteer or ministry leader has previously committed a violent or sexually related offence they cannot, under any circumstances, be considered for child related ministries or ministry with vulnerable adults.
- These offences do not preclude the applicant from serving in other ministries and the church, after careful consideration, might welcome the applicant's contribution in more appropriate areas.

5. Training

All leaders will be provided with a copy of this Policy and made aware of its content and application.

Volunteers assisting with CEIS in Canberra schools need to attend training provided by the CEIS team (see www.ceis.org.au).

Volunteers teaching SRE in NSW must receive initial and ongoing training in classroom management, as well as in child protection, accessed through external authorised providers. Supporting documentation will be kept on file upon completion.

6. Procedures to create a Safe Environment

In addition to the Procedures listed under the heading Selection and Screening, the following ministry specific procedures will be followed:

Incidents of abuse are unlikely to take place in front of another person and the presence of a witness can assist in clarifying questionable allegations. For these reasons, two team members or a team member and helper should always be present when working with or supervising children.

6.1 Procedures specific to particular Key Ministry Areas

6.1.1 Sunday School

Parents will be asked to take their children to the toilet before Sunday School. Children not independent in toileting will require parental assistance.

Parents are required to sign their children of 8 years old or younger in and out of the Sunday School rooms. A sign-in sheet is provided in each room.

An attendance sheet will be kept for all children attending the 9 -12 year old group.

Parents are to complete a child's enrolment form for each of their children who are involved in a VCF ministry, and to ensure that relevant details are kept up to date.

6.1.2 Crèche

Parents have responsibility for changing their own child's nappy and will be notified during the sermon if necessary.

Parents are to complete a child's enrolment form for each of their children who are involved in a VCF ministry, and to ensure that relevant details are kept up to date.

6.1.3 Youth Group

Ministry leaders and team members will not visit children in their homes unless a parent is present or another team member accompanies them.

When transporting individual children, leaders should gain direct parental permission. Leaders will take children directly to and from arranged venues and will not spontaneously detour or make additional arrangements.

All one-on-one pastoral care and/or praying for a child is to be carried out within sight of another team member or within a public space and not behind closed doors.

All parent helpers, including at camps, require a WWVP card.

An attendance sheet will be kept for all VCF youth group events held on church premises or starting on church premises.

Parents are to complete a child's enrolment form for each of their children who are involved in a VCF ministry, and to ensure that relevant details are kept up to date.

Leaders have the right to ask people to leave who have no valid reason to be present at a child-related activity. Police will be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.

6.1.4 Transformation Prayer Ministry (TPM)

To be authorised to be a TPM facilitator a person must have undertaken the required modules of training and be submitted to regular review by peers and then been approved to minister by the Senior Pastor.

All TPM sessions will be conducted on VCF premises.

All sessions with children are to be carried out with parental permission and where the parent is not present another team member should be present or the ministry room door left open.

When ministering to vulnerable adults it is recommended that another team member is present or the door is left open and pastoral staff made aware of the appointment.

7. Conduct

Ministry leaders, team members and helpers serving VCF are responsible for a group's safety. If a child does not conduct him/herself in an orderly manner that protects and respects other group members, then the child will be removed and referred to their parent or guardian.

8. Alcohol and Other Drugs

The consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs on church grounds or during an activity is not allowed or condoned by any leader. Any child found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is to be counselled and the parent or guardian contacted so the child can be returned home immediately.

A parent or guardian will provide a letter to the ministry leader if a child in their care is required to take prescription medication.

9. Reporting Procedures

9.1 Alternative Moderators

Alternative moderators will be appointed by VCF with the specific duty of dealing with any allegations that arise. The name and address and contact telephone number of each of the moderators will be freely available to all ministry leaders and team members. The people appointed as moderators are:

Mr Peter Moyle

Mrs Alison Just

9.2 Reporting and escalation procedures for handling allegations of child abuse within a VCF event:



If there are reasonable grounds (see below) to suspect a child has been or is suffering abuse, Care and Protection Services and VCF's insurer will be contacted immediately. The Australian Federal Police will be contacted if there is believed to be any immediate life threatening risk.

Reasonable grounds can be assumed when:

1. A child discloses that s/he has been abused, and/or
 2. Someone close to a child (eg. sibling, relative, close friend) discloses on behalf of the child.
- Any disclosure by a child or reports by someone close to the child of suspected abuse occurring within the ministries of VCF will be documented promptly, including reporting and escalation procedures followed. The documents will be held in a secure location where a breach of privacy cannot occur.
 - Where an allegation is made against a VCF leader, team member, helper or pastoral staff, the accused person will be removed from all ministry pending the outcome of all investigations.

9.3 Relevant Phone Numbers:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Australian Federal Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 131 444
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Care and Protection Services (24 hour service) For an incident occurring within the ACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1300 556 729 (general public line)• 1300 556 728 (Mandated persons line)• 0262050641 (Mandated persons fax line)• childprotection@act.gov.au
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child Protection Help Line (24 Hour service) For an incident occurring within NSW where child is at risk of significant harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 132111 (general public line)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ansvar/EA Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 03 98906851