



ACC-VIC Child Protection Policy and Procedures (Abridged)

Why a Policy?

Our Mandate comes directly from God who in his Word identified that all vulnerable people were to be protected and given special care and treatment. Ex 22:21-22, Deut 10:17-19, Jer 22:2-4, James 1:27) Protection of vulnerable people is our responsibility.

Children and young people are vulnerable and trusting. As those charged with leading and caring for them, we have a responsibility to ensure their safety and wellbeing. They have the right to be emotionally, spiritually and physically safe and respected and have their views and opinion valued at all times.

We also live in country that legislates child protection. Our Policy has been developed to help us live out of biblical mandate and our responsibilities under NSW and ACT legislation.

Our Policy has the following goals:

To minimize the risk of abuse to children and young people within the church.

To ensure that all cases of suspected abuse are handled in a consistent and thorough manner.

To ensure that leaders and programs are safe.

To ensure that children and young people are respected and valued irrespective of their gender, age, country of origin, cultural heritage, social economic background or ability.

Safe Leaders

We commit to:

a) safe recruitment of Leaders.

We will screen all prospective leaders in child related ministries, before they are appointed.

We will recruit using the NSW Government Office of the Children's Guardian Working with Children's Check or ACT Government Working with Vulnerable People Registration alongside a NSW-ACC ministry declaration for volunteers 12-17 years

We will have a minimum attendance policy for all prospective volunteer leaders prior to recruitment. (e.g. 6 months)

b) adequate Training of Leaders.

We require that **all leaders** (paid and volunteer) attend approved safe places introductory workshops that meet the requirements of the Safe church Training Agreement (e.g. Toward Safe Places) within their first year of ministry and attend a refresher course every 3 years.

We require all leaders to attend ministry-specific induction training

We require all leaders to attend additional ministry-specific department training as required by individual departments.

c) continued supervision of Leaders

We commit to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for leaders

We require all leaders agree to follow the ACC-VIC Code of Conduct for Church Leaders

c) responding to allegations of suspected children at risk of harm (abuse).

All leaders will report disclosure or suspicions of a child being at risk of significant harm, using ACC-VIC protocols.

ACC-VIC will provide support to alleged victims and perpetrators.

Where a leader has an allegation of misconduct made against them ACC-VIC protocols will be followed when responding to the complaint.

Safe Programs

We Commit to:

A) Child friendly environments.

We will afford children and young people a say in the programs and the activities in which they are to participate, by fostering and valuing their ideas, and encouraging participation in all areas of the life of the church, as far as is sensible and practical.

We will obtain information relating to the children and young person's health and family situation, to ensure that we are able to care for the physical and emotional needs of the children and young people.

b) Safe Physical environments

All Leaders to will to follow the **ACC-VIC Safe Environment Procedures.**

Leaders will exercise a duty of care through the use of forms, checklists and templates made available through the TOWARD SAFE PLACES Implementation Pack for establishing and maintaining safe environments in ACC-VIC churches.

All senior leadership and heads of department will ensure that the following areas are incorporated into establishing and maintaining a safe physical environment in their churches: WH&S; First Aid Protocols; food safety practices; risk assessment and hazard identification and reduction for activities; adequate ministry supervision for activities; transport protocols; critical incident and emergency protocols and ministry review.

d) Record Keeping

All ACC-VIC church will gather and store necessary information relating to leaders, children and families involved in their programs in order to carry out appropriate duty of care. This information will be stored securely for a minimum of 30 years.

To create child safe and child friendly churches we need to ensure that we have safe leaders and safe programs.

*Jesus called the children to him and said "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."
(Luke 18:15-17 NIV 1973 International Bible Society)*

Our Policy applies to all credential pastors, elders, staff members and volunteer workers associated with ministry to children or young people within the ministry of any church aligned with ACC-VIC.

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

Child – a person who is under the age of 16 years (NSW) or under 12 years (ACT).

Child – safe places that take steps to keep children safe.

Child-friendly places where children are valued, respected and included so they feel confident that they will be listened to.

Leaders credential pastors, elders, staff members and volunteer workers.

Young person a person who is aged 16 years or above but who is under the age of 18 years (NSW) or 12-18 Years (ACT)

Our Policy is supported by:

- ACC Ministerial Code of Conduct
 - ACC-VIC Safe Environment Procedures
 - TOWARDS SAFE PLACES Participate Workbook
 - TOWARDS SAFE PLACES Implementation Pack
 - ACC-VIC Response to Complaint Guidelines
- Information can also be accessed at: <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/child-protection/about-child-abuse/how-to-make-a-report-to-child-protection>

As such **Our Policy** should not be solely relied upon for advice.

Remember, you are not on your own in these matters for more information talk to the ACC-VIC State Office on 03 9240 6070.

Reporting Suspected Risk of Harm (abuse)

VIC: DHS mandatory reporters guide:

Mandatory reporters line: 13 12 78

Public Help Line 13 12 78

http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/582591/flowchart-mandatory-reporting-27-5-10.pdf

Counseling help

National: Kids Help Line – 1800 55 1800

Lifeline – 13 11 14

Bravehearts (counselling and advocacy) 1800272831

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/crisis.html#csa>

Our Policy takes into account:

National Work Health & safety Act 2011

Work Health & Safety regulation 2011

VIC

Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012

Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013

Child Protection (Working with Children) Amendment (miscellaneous) Regulation 2013

Our Policy has been developed by ACC-VIC State Office.