



# CHILD SAFETY POLICY



## EVALUATE, REVIEW, AND UPDATE

COCWA is keen to receive feedback on this policy. Any future revision will take into account feedback from churches, and any developments in regulation and best practice.

*The Child Safety Policy, Western Australian Churches* will otherwise be reviewed regularly.

This document is clearly marked with the date of adoption by the Churches of Christ in Western Australia Inc Board. The Board will provide opportunity for churches to contribute to the review of this policy.

## INTRODUCTION

Churches of Christ in Western Australia Inc (COCWA) is committed to supporting member churches as a safe place for all people who engage with them including children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

As a Member Church affiliated with COCWA we are committed to being a safe place for children in accordance with this policy.

## POLICY

### OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

We are committed to child safety because it is integral to our mission.

We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.

We are committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

We have comprehensive policies and procedures for recruiting and managing our people, both staff and volunteers.

We are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

**If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.**

## DEFINITIONS

“**Child**” and “**children**” refers to people under the age of 18.

“**Children’s ministry**” refers to any activity or program where any of the participants are under 18 and not accompanied by parents or carers authorised by the parents.

“**Leaders**” are those in some level of leadership in our church. This includes not only the Ministers, Pastors, Elders, Deacons and Ministry Leaders but also those appointed to some level of leadership role in the church, and includes those under the age of 18.

“**Workers**” are those who are involved in children’s ministry other than in a leadership role, including both staff and volunteers, and includes those under the age of 18.

## CHILDREN

We find practical and age-appropriate ways to give participants a say in the programs and the activities in which they participate by fostering and valuing their ideas and encouraging participation. We will be accountable and transparent.

We provide a child-friendly environment, allowing people to raise their concerns in an appropriate manner.

We request appropriate information relating to the program participants, including children’s health and family situation, to ensure that we are able to care for their physical and emotional needs.

We promote diversity and acceptance in our church, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of **Aboriginal children**;
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from **culturally and/or linguistically diverse** backgrounds; and
- Ensure that children with a **disability** are safe and can participate equitably.

Children and their parents are made aware of our Codes of Conduct and are required to abide by them.

## RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFETY

Everyone associated with COCWA and its affiliates has some responsibility for safety as set out below.

Who	Role in promoting Safe Places
Individuals (participants)	<p>Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures.</p> <p>Take personal responsibility for their own and others' safety; raise any issues of concern.</p>
Workers	<p>Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures.</p> <p>Encourage program participants to take responsibility for their own and others' safety and advise how to report any issues of concern.</p>
Leaders	<p>Be aware of and act in accordance with policies and procedures.</p> <p>Carry out responsibilities in accordance with employment contract/position description.</p>
Governing Body	<p>Take responsibility for what happens in our church or agency.</p> <p>Identify, assess and control risks, and review the effectiveness of control measures.</p> <p>Ensure appropriate insurance arrangements are in place.</p> <p>Adopt appropriate policies and review them regularly.</p> <p>Ensure the relevant policies are widely communicated and lived out in the church.</p> <p>Ensure the church or agency is compliant with regulatory obligations.</p> <p>Seek help from COCWA where needed.</p> <p>Accept help from COCWA where COCWA believes necessary including where minimum requirements are not being met.</p>

## GOVERNING BODY / ELDERS

All people in authority in our church are committed to promoting child safety. They are aware that they would be committing a criminal offence if they knew of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and had the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.<sup>1</sup>

The governing body of the church ensures the provision of COCWA Safe Training at least annually. The governing body of the church conducts an annual self-assessment to identify how we can improve the way we apply the Standards in our church.

The self-review will be done as a part of the annual insurance renewal through CCI/COCWA insurance programme. Having completed a self-assessment, the governing body makes an annual insurance declaration to COCWA confirming that the church complies with the SAFE Standard areas identified in the self-review form. Where the church does not comply, the governing body specifies any areas for improvement and identifies what action will be taken, by when, to ensure compliance at a minimum and ideally best practice.

COCWA oversees these declarations.

## SAFE CONTACT PERSON

At least one person is nominated as a Safe Contact Person. The name and contact details of the Safe Contact Person are provided at the end of this policy and are widely publicised.

## OUR LEADERS, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

All Workers and Leaders are required to agree to the relevant Code of Conduct, as defined by the church, and to abide by it. Information and assistance in developing a Code of Conduct can be obtained by contacting the COCWA office.

Leaders, staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the relevant Code of Conduct.

A person cannot be involved in children's ministry unless they have been screened, completed the required training and signed the Code of Conduct.

All staff and volunteers have a clear description of their role in the form of a position description or short statement.

## RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety, for both paid and unpaid leadership roles.

We actively encourage applications from women, Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people living with a disability.

We carry out thorough background checks for both paid and unpaid leadership roles.

All Leaders and Workers aged 18 and over are required to obtain/apply for a Working With Children Check prior to commencing involvement with children.

<sup>1</sup> Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website.

All Leaders and Workers are required to be interviewed and approved by the Senior Minister or other person authorised by the governing body before commencing their involvement with children's ministry. A Working With Children Check must be obtained before commencing involvement with children's ministry unless the Senior Minister or other person authorised by the governing body approves the person on the basis that the Working with Children Check is pending.<sup>2</sup>

## TRAINING AND SUPERVISION OF PEOPLE INVOLVED IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRY

Everyone who is involved in children's ministry must undergo training in child safety, including how to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse, how to detect potential signs of child abuse and how to report any concerns appropriately.

We want all leaders, staff, volunteers, parents/carers and children and others involved with our activities to be willing and able to raise any safety concerns in accordance with our Child Safety Reporting Procedure.

We require the Chair of our governing body, the Senior Minister, the Safe Contact Person, and the key children & youth ministry leader/s to attend a Safe Training workshop within 3 months of commencing in their important leadership role. They are also required to ensure that their training and Working With Children Check is kept current: renewed every 3 years. It is very important that these key leaders set a high standard for these requirements as they are primarily responsible to ensure that all ministries of the church are provided in a SAFE environment for all people.

The Chair and Senior Minister are primarily responsible to ensure that SAFE training is provided for all leaders and workers within children and youth ministry is provided at least annually.

People joining any ministry team (including the governing body of the Church) prior to a workshop opportunity, an awareness of SAFE protocols, procedures and implementation for the ministry that they are going to be involved in, should form a part of the induction to the ministry role process. However, no person should commence as a children or youth ministry volunteer until their Working With Children Check has been attained.

We provide ongoing training, supervision and support for all people who are involved in children's ministry.

## RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS

### ALLEGATIONS, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

We work to ensure all children, families, staff, volunteers and others involved with our activities know what to do and who to tell if they are concerned about any behaviour towards themselves or others.

Our church takes all allegations seriously and will investigate where appropriate, in accordance with the COCWA policy on Investigating Complaints of Misconduct.

We will seek guidance from the COCWA Executive Minister before conducting an investigation.

<sup>2</sup> With certain exceptions, it is legal to commence working with children provided you have applied for the WWC. The designated person can decide on behalf of the church whether to insist that the person obtains the check before commencing, or whether it is enough to have applied for the check.

## REPORTING

Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels in accordance with our **Child Safety Reporting Procedure**.

Our Child Safety Reporting Procedure recognises that in WA:

- all adults have an obligation to report information to the police if they have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16; and
- any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

## RECORD-KEEPING AND PRIVACY

We keep records of Working with Children Checks, and of all allegations of abuse and other safety concerns. All records are securely stored.

We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks in both physical and online environments.

## REGULAR REVIEW

We conduct an annual self-review of safety in our church.

This Policy will be reviewed every two years. It will be reviewed following any significant incidents, should they occur. We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.



## AUTHORISATION

Church name:	
Approved by governing body on:	
Scheduled review date:	

## SAFE CONTACT PERSON

Name:	
Phone number:	
Email:	
Other contact details:	