

INTRODUCTION

COCWA Safe is a training programme supplied by Churches of Christ in WA Inc.

COCWA Safe is based on materials originally developed by the Childsafe organisation. We acknowledge Childsafe for their pioneering work in promoting safe practices in churches.

Over time, we've developed our own training materials. We chose the name "COCWA Safe" because we think that the principles of ensuring safe behaviours and safe environments applies to any volunteer serving in churches or ministry activities.

We've developed our training package to best suit the particular needs of our family of Churches and Ministry Affiliates. We hope that you find this training package really helps you serve well in your setting.

In order to ensure maximum effectiveness of this training package, it is important that you commit to read the Childsafe Team Member book. This enables us to keep the training session brief.

We know that it's a struggle to run training sessions that go beyond 90 minutes. We know that it's a challenge to ensure that ALL volunteers engage with this training. Since Childsafe was first implemented across our Association in WA, we believe that keeping the face to face training to a minimum and asking Volunteers to be responsible for their own training experience has been effective in generating a healthy benchmark culture in small, mid and large size churches.

We love feedback! Please pass on any questions, comments or suggestions that emerge from your training experiences.

TRAINING CYCLE

Safe Training is aimed at Ministry Leaders who are then better informed and equipped to train their team in child and church safe practices.

COCWA performs Safe Training up to three times a year. Keep an eye out in our newsletter of upcoming dates.

It is recommended that every volunteer renews COCWA Churchsafe training every three years.

It is recommended that ALL volunteers go through this training. This includes people who may be health or education professionals. Including all volunteers ensures that every person serving is aware of the practical details of your ministry setting, including your own policies and processes relating to safe behaviours and safe environments.

COCWA SAFE TRAINING

OUR AIMS

- To assist Churches and organisations associated with COCWA to foster and maintain an overall culture of welcome and care through all activities.
- To ensure that volunteers can serve in a ministry setting with confidence that in the event of an accident, incident, disclosure event or when an issue of concern occurs.
- To assist Churches and organisations associated with COCWA in the communication of the policies and procedures related to safe behaviours and safe environments in their local setting.

WHY COCWA SAFE TRAINING IS IMPORTANT.

Many people receive training around safe behaviours and safe environments in their workplaces. So why is it important that all volunteers (including teachers, childcare workers and medical professionals) attend a COCWA Safe Training event?

1. So that in the event of an accident, incident, disclosure event or when any other kind of undesirable event happens, you know what do to and who to go to. (Pull the lever rather than pushing the button.)
2. So that every person, regardless of their age, gender, race or ability can be received with Christlike welcome and care.
3. Fostering a community around common values and practices (our personal values and practices may be different).

FOUNDATIONS OF A COCWA SAFE TRAINING

SAFE TEAMS

As a Safe Team Member this is what we ask you to be committed to:

- To be a part of a team (A minimum of 3 in a team is essential for children's and youth ministry).

Examples:

Escorting and supervising children with toileting.

In an event where one team member needs to leave the room.

Driving a young person home.

Meeting one-on-one.

- Know who the ministry leader is.
- Know who your team leader is.
- Complete a volunteer application form.
- Obtain and maintain a valid Working with Children Check or National Police Clearance where applicable. (A Working with Children Check is essential for any volunteer over the age of 18 who is not a parent of a child involved in a ministry activity. NB the exception to this is where a parent is participating as a volunteer leader on an overnight activity. Please check changes to Working with Children Check requirements at least annually.)
- Participate in COCWA Safe Training every 3 years.
- Commit to reading the Childsafe Team Member handbook.
- Know that your Church or organisation has appropriate policies and procedures in place to support volunteers and to protect all persons engaged in an activity setting.

COCWA Safe is designed to protect kids/young people/all people who are participating in ministry activities. It also designed to help volunteers serve with confidence.

As a Volunteer you are not expected to be a professional but you are expected to be committed to serving to the best of your ability and in accordance with COCWA Safe guidelines.

COCWA Safe Training is NOT a replacement for you committing to read the Team Member book. It is an overview that enables volunteers to be aware of processes to follow in your volunteer setting.

Team Member books are given to you free of charge the first time you undertake this training. Please keep this book and use it as a reference/refresher guide.

SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

SAFE TEAMS

Accidents and Incidents do happen!

Accident

- An undesired event that results in harm
- People are hurt, property is damaged, programme is disrupted.

Incident

- An undesired event which could have resulted in harm or damage
- A near miss

As a Team Member you are encouraged to keep your eyes and ears open!

- Example of photo from Vietnam
- Broken/damaged equipment
- Look with fresh eyes each time you serve

Your Team Member handbook gives you detailed information on how to deal with Blood & Bodily Fluids (Pages 50 onwards).

Basic guidelines:

- Wear disposable gloves
- Use paper towels
- Use disinfectants to wash areas
- Dispose of waste materials appropriately
- Any blood spill should be washed with lots of cold water.
- ALWAYS wash your hands!

FIRST AID KITS

All volunteers should:

- Know where First Aid Kits are located.
- Know who can access and apply first aid.
- Know who to go to in the event of a medical emergency.
- Always check that a portable First Aid kit is taken to outside events.
- Always check that the First Aid Kit is kept well stocked and up-to-date.

Basic guidelines on how to help a child/teen person through an accident or incident.

- Send a volunteer to locate a team leader (who will take the lead in liaising with parents and initiating a medical response plan).
- Under the direction of the Team Leader, volunteers can assist by:
- Providing care of other children/teens in the programme, removing them as soon as possible from the accident or incident.
- Providing comfort for the injured child/teen.
- Communicate with the child/teen.
- Accept regressive behaviour.

Each church (ministry affiliate) should include as a part of their emergency response plan policies and procedures to protect people from exposure (media, people, danger).

EMERGENCY EXITS

- Where is your Church muster point?
- Do you know what to do in the event of a fire or emergency vacuation?
- Do you know where the fire extinguishers are?
- Do you know who can use the fire extinguishers and how to use them?

ABUSE

Any act that endangers the emotional, spiritual or physical wellbeing of any person.

TYPES OF ABUSE

Emotional Abuse

A situation in which a caregiver repeatedly rejects a person or uses threatening language or behaviour designed to intimidate or frighten.

E.g. name-calling, put-downs or continual coldness.

Physical Abuse

A situation in which a person suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from an injury inflicted by a caregiver.

Neglect

A situation in which a caregiver fails to provide a person with the basic necessities of life to the extent that the person's health and development is, or is likely to be significantly harmed.

Sexual Abuse

A situation in which a person uses power or authority over a child/teen/adult to involve them in sexual activity.

- Can involve an adult, an adolescent or an older child/teen.

Spiritual Abuse

"Spiritual abuse is arguably less recognised and researched than other forms of abuse but can be defined as 'the mistreatment of a person who is in need of help, support or greater spiritual empowerment, with the result of weakening, undermining or decreasing that person's spiritual empowerment' ... or ' someone using their power within a framework of spiritual belief or practise to satisfy their needs at the expense of others' ... These definitions show that spiritual abuse is like any other form of abuse and is about the misuse of power. However, what the definitions do not show is the personal pain and difficulties that people who have been spiritually abused experience.

<http://www.ccpas.co.uk/articles/Spiritual%20Abuse.html>

FACTS AND MYTHS

1. Child sexual abuse only happens in poor and dysfunctional families.
2. Most children are abused by people they know well.
3. Sex offenders are older men.
4. Children often lie about sexual assault.
5. Men who sexually abuse boys are homosexual.
6. Most sexual abuse continues over a long period of time and not as a single isolated event.
7. It is only abuse when physical violence is involved.
8. A child only has to tell someone for the abuse to be stopped.
9. Sexual abuse only happens to children.

WHY CHILDREN DON'T SPEAK UP

Children may not tell someone about abuse because they want to protect others, such as a parent, or they want to protect themselves. Perpetrators often threaten to harm the child or their loved ones.

Sometimes a child may be embarrassed or ashamed because they think the abuse is their fault. A child may tell an adult who does not believe them or who does nothing to stop the abuse. They are unlikely to tell again.

OUR REACTION

What feelings/emotional reaction does the subject of abuse raise for you?

Pause and consider ... how might you respond?

What might you need to put in place so that you can respond in a way that enables you to offer the appropriate level of support?

RESPONDING TO ABUSE

- Recognising abuse
- Responding sensitively
- How children disclose
- Reporting abuse
- Mandatory reporting: This applies specifically to sexual abuse. (The requirement applies to medical professionals, teachers & social workers even when they are acting in a voluntary role.)

RESPONDING SENSITIVELY

- Listen carefully
- Tell the child that you believe them
- Tell them that it is not their fault
- Let them know that you will have to tell someone so that they can help stop the abuse
- Tell the child that you are pleased that they told you
- Do not promise that you will not tell anyone
- Involve your Team Leader as soon as possible

DISCUSSION SCENARIO - DISCLOSURE IN A GROUP SETTING

There are two guiding principles to keep in mind.

1. Protect the child sensitively
2. Protect the group sensitively

You ask for children/teens to volunteer to pray in front of your group. In the process of praying, this child/teen begins to disclose an episode of abuse. What do you do?

OR
In a ministry team time, someone begins to disclose a significant and painful issue. How would you respond?

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE OR SUSPECTED ABUSE.

As a team member you have a moral responsibility to inform a ministry leader if you know or suspect of abuse.

Do not raise your concerns with another person.

Speak directly to your Ministry Team Leader for further action.

Who are the "Go-To People" in your Church?

Reasonable Grounds for reporting abuse in relation to children & teenagers.

- A child tells you
- Someone close to the child tells you
- Indicators arouse your suspicions
- Physical signs

If you make a notification to the designated responsible person (i.e. Ministry Team Leader) with reasonable grounds, you cannot be held legally liable.

If you are unsure whether you have reasonable grounds to report, then report. We have a Christian responsibility to protect the innocent (Matt 18:6) and in the eyes of society, a moral obligation to report. Medical professionals and teachers are mandated to report.

MINISTRY SCENARIOS

The very best way to integrate COCWA Safe principles is to think about how we might respond in different situations that can arise.

Each of these scenarios is drawn from real life experiences of volunteers serving in church based settings.

Even if you find yourself in a group discussing a scenario that doesn't relate to an activity or an age group that you serve with, you will find great benefit in applying the common principles.

DISCUSSION SCENARIO 1

At a water based activity, a 14 year old girl wearing a bikini is hoisted onto the shoulders of a male leader who plans to initiate a water fight.

What issues are raised here? Consider not only the 'dress' issues but also the nature of safe/unsafe activities.

DISCUSSION SCENARIO 2

You are on a kids ministry/mission team. During the session, one of the children comes and sits in your lap putting an arm around your neck.

What issues are raised here if you are with children:

- Aged 0-5 years
- Aged 6-12 years

DISCUSSION SCENARIO 3

A child exhibits aggressive behaviour that results in several parents bringing a complaint to you.

How do you handle this situation? Consider:

- The child
- The team
- The carer/parent of the child
- The parents of the other children involved.

DISCUSSION SCENARIO 4

During your weekly programme, one of the Leaders continually refers to participants in the ministry programme using nicknames that he makes up for those he likes and dislikes.

As a Team Member, how might you handle this situation?

DISCUSSION SCENARIO 5

Someone on your team (Team Leader/Team Member) asks to meet with you one-on-one.

Under what circumstances is this okay or not okay? What factors do you need to consider in making a decision?

DISCUSSION SCENARIO 6

During your ministry session, you take photos of kids/teens/people. These photos are then used for promotion of events on brochures and on Facebook.

Is this okay?

DISCUSSION SCENARIO 7

Youth ministry is meeting via online chats (e.g. Zoom, house party etc)

What procedures do you put in place to avoid risk?

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

- Read and purchase the Team Members Guide and Team Leader Guide Book from COCWA website
- Train your team and have them sign the Training Acknowledgement Form
- Be committed to a safe culture
- Visit the Resources page on COCWA website for templates and information

QUESTIONS?

This probably has raised questions for you.

Take a couple of minutes and jot any questions you have for discussion.

Being a Safe Church is an ongoing process and government standards and requirements are ever evolving. Ensure you stay up to date!

TO THE TEAM LEADER

I completed COCWA Safe Training on
..... At (Church/organization or online).

I have received and commit to read the Childsafe Team Member Handbook.

I commit to follow the safety and care strategies of (Church or organization).

Signed Date