

CLIENT PROTECTION POLICY
AND
PROCEDURES

Mount Hawthorn Community Church

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Review History

Version	Date adopted	Meeting	Amended Yes/No
Version 1	2008	First draft	
Version 2	5 February 2017	Special General Meeting	Yes

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Policy Statement

The Mount Hawthorn Community Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all its Members, Leaders and particularly the children.

The Church's Policy & Procedures aims to reduce the risk of abuse occurring, and to ensure that a caring and appropriate response is taken should abuse occur.

1.2 Scope

The Policy & Procedures apply to:

- All Ministries authorised by or under the control of the Church, including those ministries undertaken where the church meets, or at any other location.
- All Leaders within the Church or engaged by the Church.
- All Members of the Church.

1.3 Authority

These are the Policy & Procedures of Mount Hawthorn Community Church and have been adopted for use by the congregation of Mount Hawthorn Community Church. Mount Hawthorn Community Church is committed to implementing the Policy & Procedures and training our Leaders in its content and application.

1.4 Definitions

Child/ren Any person under the age of 18.

Abuse Can consist of one or more of but is not restricted to the following:

Physical Abuse – Any non-accidental physical injury or contact which results in the person feeling fear or distress.

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 any act that erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear consensual but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential.

Emotional Abuse – The chronic attitude or behaviour of one person that is directed at another person, or the creation of an emotional environment that is detrimental to a person's development.

Neglect - Any serious omission or commission that jeopardizes or impairs a persons' development.

Church The Mount Hawthorn Community Church, PO Box 531, Mount Hawthorn, WA 6016

Helpers Any unpaid person over the age of 16 who is invited by a Leader to assist them in their Ministry.

Leader Any person (paid or unpaid) aged 18 or over who is responsible for the control and safety of members placed in their care whilst holding a formal position in a recognised Ministry of the Church. A leader could include but is not limited to:

- Pastors
- Small group Leaders
- Music, Drama or other Ministry Leaders
- Counsellors
- Youth Leaders
- Sunday School teachers
- Teachers
- Kid's Club Leaders

Members Any person, including children, who attends or participates in Church Ministries.

Ministry Any activity that is conducted under the auspices of the Church.

Nominated Client Protection Officer - CPO - A member of the church who is appointed or reappointed annually at the AGM, or at an SGM if required, to be the lead person responsible for responding to a disclosure. The church may also appoint a back up CPO at the AGM or an SGM to perform the CPO role if the nominated CPO is not available in person or by phone.

As the lead person responsible for responding to a disclosure, the CPO will support the victim or any person who receives a disclosure of an incident that is of concern. They will:

- ensure that a clear, victim-focused procedure is followed,
- confirm that appropriate medical and police intervention, as well as counselling and/or emotional support, have been obtained for the victim,
- make sure the person who receives the disclosure fills out an incident response form, and
- ensure that the elders are made aware of what has happened, in line with police direction.

If neither the CPO nor a back up CPO is available in person or by phone, the elders at the time will nominate one elder to perform the role of the CPO for that alleged incident.

Spiritual Director - MHCC employs a spiritual director who is independently supervised and also supervised by the Eldership team. This role assists people in their spiritual journey. This can include one to one time, silence, sharing and listening including prayer. This service is available to people from within and outside of the church of any age. The frequency and length of this journey is negotiated with the Director and the participant.

2. EXTERNAL POLICIES

We acknowledge that some Ministries in the Church might have external affiliation with other organisations. These organisations will possibly have policies governing the issues of Member and/or Child Safety and Abuse. The Church's Policy & Procedures are not intended to replace or conflict with the other policies, but instead to operate in conjunction with them.

3. POLICY REVIEW

The Policy & Procedures will be reviewed annually at the Annual General Meeting (AGM), or at a Special General Meeting (SGM) if required. Church decision makers will inform the congregation that any suggested changes should be submitted in writing to the secretary of the Property & Finance Committee one week prior to the AGM or SGM.

Any proposed changes will be approved at the church AGM or SGM before being implemented.

The current policy will be held on the church website and a paper copy of all versions, both past and present, will be kept in the Client Protection File held by the secretary of the Property & Finance Committee. A copy of the policy will also be kept in the cupboard in the hall and in the Godly Play cupboard. Blank copies of the Incident Report form will be kept with the policy document.

The CPO will be appointed or reappointed at the AGM or SGM.

4. OBLIGATIONS

4.1 Spiritual

The core beliefs of the Church require us to treat all people with love and dignity and to care for those who are less powerful and in need of nurture and protection.

4.2 Legal

The Church and its Leaders are subject to Federal and State legislation and principles established through common law.

4.3 Ethical

These are unacceptable behaviours for adults in our church:

- Inappropriate conversation of a sexual nature.
- Coarse language, especially that of a sexual nature.
- Suggestive gestures or remarks.
- Jokes of a sexual nature.
- Inappropriate touching.
- Using inappropriate literature eg. M, MA-rated material with young children.
- Acts of violence committed in the course of an activity.

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

Where members have concerns that the above obligations are not being met, they should raise their concerns with the elders.

5. SELECTION & SCREENING

5.1 Leaders

Leaders involved in Children's Ministry must be carefully selected and screened. Prior to Leaders commencing Child-related Ministries, the following precautions will be taken:

- Each Leader is required to have an awareness of the content of the Policy & Procedures and be prepared to work within them.
- A Leader will be a Member of the Church or a person who has been considered for the role and approved by the elders at a minuted elders' meeting.
- A Working with Children check will be obtained and a record of this kept in the Client Protection File by the secretary of the Property and Finance Committee for 50 years. If the church should be dissolved for any reason, these records will be lodged at the office of a solicitor or accountant, to be decided upon at that time.
- If a new person who is unknown to the elders wishes to work with children they will be required to provide the elders with a Police Clearance, a Working with Children Check and 2 references for consideration and approval.

Where the Church has identified that an applicant has previously committed a violent or sexually related offence they cannot, under any circumstances, be considered for child related ministries.

These offences do not necessarily preclude the applicant from serving in other Ministries, subject to consideration and approval on a person-by-person basis by the elders.

5.2 Helpers

Helpers are required to have an awareness of the content of the Policy & Procedures and be prepared to work within them.

Leaders who accept the assistance of a Helper must be satisfied of the Helpers maturity and their suitability for Children's Ministry.

6. TRAINING

Training for Leaders in the policy and procedures will be held annually at the commencement of the school year, by the CPO.

7. A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

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 adults will always be present when working with or supervising children under 8 years of age, when they are not within direct sight of their parents.

It is acceptable for one adult to work with children over 8 providing there is more than one child in attendance. If there is only 1 child, the adult and the child must stay within sight of other adults from the church.

The Church ministry of Spiritual Direction is by its nature private. As such it is not always appropriate to be undertaken in continued public or parental scrutiny.

Where children seek Spiritual Direction, initial parental permission is to be sought and the elders informed, and this agreement is to be reviewed annually by the parents and the elders.

Leaders will not visit Children in their homes unless a parent is present or another Leader accompanies them.

When transporting Children, Leaders should not be alone with a child in a car. Where this is not practical, Leaders will take Children directly to and from arranged venues and will not spontaneously detour or make additional arrangements. No one will transport a child without the parent being aware.

Where a Leader wishes to use telephone or social media to communicate with a child of school age the concept of public scrutiny still applies. When a Leader wishes to use these media to communicate individually with a child the Leader will obtain the parent's permission to make this contact.

Annual training for Leaders and Helpers will include training in appropriate touch.

Adults and Children are expected to respect each other's privacy during activities that require undressing, dressing or changing clothes. Leaders will set an example by protecting their own privacy in similar situations. No Leader will be alone in a room with a Child while either is changing.

Initiations and secret ceremonies are prohibited. All aspects of every Child-related programme will be open to observation by parents/guardians.

Leaders have the right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at Child-related activities to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any reasonable request to leave.

Within the context of the general congregation it is assumed that parents are happy for their children's photo to be taken unless they tell the elders otherwise. However, photos cannot be put on social media without the parents express permission.

When a church activity involves the general public eg. Wiggly woo, parents' permission must be sought prior to photographs being taken.

8. DISCIPLINING CHILDREN

It is not the responsibility of the church or its Leaders to punish a child. A Leader may use non-punitive methods for encouraging engagement and promoting supportive relationships. As a last resort, if a child does not abide by the rules set down by the Leader, or is an obstruction to the care of other children or may cause harm to other children, the child will be removed and referred back to their parent or guardian.

At no time will a Leader administer any form of physical, emotional or mental punishment.

9. REPORTING PROCEDURES

The following reporting and escalation procedures have been established by the church for handling allegations of abuse where there are reasonable grounds to suspect a child has been or is suffering abuse.

Reasonable grounds can be assumed when:

- A child discloses that he or she has been abused, and/or
- Someone close to a child (e.g. sibling, relative, close friend) discloses on behalf of that child.

Where an adult has disclosed that they have been or are suffering abuse, their consent must be obtained before the reporting procedures are followed. If the person who receives the disclosure would like to know more about support services, this information can be obtained from the CPO without breaching the confidentiality of the disclosing adult.

9.1 When a child discloses that he or she has been abused, or another person ,close to the child, discloses on their behalf, the person who receives the disclosure:

- will immediately contact the Police and the Church's Insurer, or immediately contact the CPO for assistance to do so:
 - Phone Police on 131 444
 - Phone Church Insurer on 1300 650 540;
 - Phone CPO- Elise Orange on 0420 292 397
 - If CPO is not contactable:
 - Phone Back up CPO Caryl Gioia on 0438 303 241
 - If back up CPO is not contactable, contact an elder to seek interim CPO
- will provide appropriate pastoral care (see below) to the child who has made the disclosure; and
- will work with the CPO to fill in the Incident Report Form and give it to the CPO for further action.

The Incident Report Form is included in Appendix 1 of this document, and is also available for printing out on the MHCC website, www.mhcc.asn.au/.

Appropriate Pastoral Care

Appropriate pastoral care includes:

- If the alleged incident has taken place recently, seeking medical attention immediately at a tertiary hospital, and retaining clothing worn by the person to be handed to the police for forensic examination.
- Treating each allegation seriously and not attempting to deny the allegation or minimise its impact on the alleged victim. The matter should not be swept under the carpet.
- Not pushing the victim to disclose details of the alleged incident nor attempting to investigate the allegation.
- Assuring the victim that they are understood: that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has happened is not their fault, and that they are correct in disclosing the incident.
- Not making contact with the alleged perpetrator. Any concern regarding the well being of the alleged perpetrator should be referred to the CPO.
- Maintaining the victim's privacy at all times.

9.2 When the CPO is notified of a disclosure of abuse, the CPO:

- will confirm that appropriate medical and police intervention has been obtained for the victim, and take action if needed,
- will notify the family, if this is in accordance with police direction,
- will support the person who receives a disclosure of abuse,
- make sure the person fills out an incident response form, and ensures that this is kept confidential, apart from providing to the Police and the Insurer,
- will inform the elders that an allegation has been made, and against whom. They will not be provided with further details unless on Police direction, and
- will meet the record keeping requirements set out below.

9.3 When informed by the CPO that an allegation has been made, the elders:

- will ensure that the accused person is removed from all Child related activities pending the outcome of all investigations.

The Church reserves the right to carry out Church disciplinary procedures in accordance with the constitution of the Church.

9.4 Record Keeping

At the conclusion of the CPO's involvement in the investigation, the CPO will provide the Incident Response Form and all related documentation in a sealed envelope to the secretary of the Property and Finance Committee for insurance purposes. The documents will be held by the secretary of the Property & Finance Committee in a secure location for 50 years.

10. ALCOHOL & DRUGS

The consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs by children on church grounds or during an activity is not to be condoned by any Leader. Any child found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is to be counselled and the parents/guardians contacted so the child can be returned home immediately.

MOUNT HAWTHORN COMMUNITY CHURCH

Incident Report Form

File No: IR

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DETAILS OF ALLEGED ABUSE VICTIM		
PERSON 1	Name:	Age:
	Address:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Parent/ Guardian:		Tel:
Have the parents/guardians of the alleged victim been notified? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
If yes, person(s) spoken to:		Date:
		Time:
What were they told?:		
.....		
.....		
.....		
.....		
DETAILS OF WITNESS INVOLVED (IF ANY)		
WITNESS 1	Name:	Tel:
	Address:	Age:
WITNESS 2	Name:	Tel:
	Address:	Age:
DETAILS OF ALLEGED PERPETRATOR OF THE ABUSE (IF KNOWN)		
Name:		Age:
Address:		<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Tel:		
Does this perpetrator know about the report? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
If yes, who has spoken to him/her:		Date:
		Time:
What was he/she told?:		
.....		
.....		
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