



GRACE COMMUNION
INTERNATIONAL

Child Protection Policy

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Introduction

Grace Communion International (New Zealand) (“The Church”) believes that we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, and to keep them safe. This policy aims to ensure an ongoing safe place for children and young people where they can grow and flourish.

The Church is committed to the following principles:

- Fostering a culture of child safety at all levels within the organisation.
- Committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- Supporting and respecting all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- Having zero tolerance for child abuse and having systems in place to protect children from abuse, taking all allegations and concerns seriously and responding to them consistently in line with our policy and procedures.
- Providing written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children through a formal application process and code of conduct.
- Ensuring that children know who to talk with if they are worried or feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable to raise issues.
- Ensuring that there is a preventative and proactive approach with regular training and education for staff on child safety.

Purpose

The purpose is both a legal requirement and our responsibility as a Christian community. It aims to ensure the safety of our young people, our Leaders and our volunteers. The Church is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people.

Scope

This policy applies to all people involved in ministry for children and young people within the Church. This includes all Ministers, and Leaders (paid or unpaid) and all volunteers.

Related Legislation

The policy acknowledges the following legislation:

- Treaty of Waitangi, 1984
- Oranga Tamariki Act, 1989
(previously Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act)
- United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child, 1989
- Domestic Violence Act, 1995
- Vulnerable Children Act, 2014

Responsibility and Review

The Vulnerable Children Act requires organisation to ensure that those working with children understand the nature of abuse and neglect.

This document is the policy of Grace Communion International (New Zealand) in respect of:

- defining and identifying abuse and neglect
- dealing with disclosures of abuse
- recording, reporting and responding to suspected abuse

All personnel, whether employed or volunteer, must have a thorough understanding of this policy and be seen to be practicing this policy.

This policy will be reviewed annually, and following any significant event.

Definitions

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

Physical Abuse – Any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as:

- Hitting, punching, kicking
- Shaking (particularly infants)
- Burning, biting, pulling out hair
- 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 or powerlessness to involve them in sexual activity. It does not necessarily involve genital contact but is any act which erodes the sexual boundaries 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 which is directed at another person or the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a child's development, self-esteem and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include: devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising, or chronic and extreme domestic violence in the child's presence.

Neglect – Characterised by the failure to provide for the basic child's needs. Any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a child's development.

Child	Any person under the age of 18.
Helper	Any unpaid person over the age of 16 who is invited by a Leader to assist them on an ad hoc basis.
Leader	Any person (paid or unpaid) over the age of 18 who is directly responsible for the control and safety of children placed in their care. This could include, but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creche Leaders• Children's Church Leaders• Youth Leaders
Member	Any person, including children, who attends and participates in Church ministries.
The Church	Grace Communion International (New Zealand).
Youth	Any person aged 13 – 18 years old.

Selection and Screening of Helpers

Leaders

Application Process

All Leaders will complete the "Child or Youth Volunteer Agreement". A copy of this Agreement is attached to this policy.

Police Vetting

All Leaders must be vetted through the Church by the New Zealand Police. The vetting must produce a clear result.

Recommendation

All Leaders must be recommended for work with children and youth by pastoral leadership of the Church.

Agreement to Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct which details the expectations of Leaders working with children/youth is included as part of the Application form. All Leaders must sign and date this so as to indicate that they have read and understood these requirements.

Approval

Approval to undertake work with children and youth is only to be given on the basis of the above conditions being met.

Written approval will be provided to the Leader from the Church administrative office and must have been received before work is commenced. A copy of this approval will be retained by the Church.

Training

All Leaders must undertake Child Safety training before work with children is commenced. Each leader must complete the following online courses offered by safeforchildren.co.nz/

- Cultural Awareness and the Treaty of Waitangi
- Child Protection Training (Part 1 and 2)

Course costs will be covered by the Church.

Helpers

Helpers do not need to follow the process detailed above, but they must always be supervised by a Leader who is present when any Helper is working with children.

Helpers must have an awareness of the content of the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct and agree to work in accordance with these.

Safe Environment

Incidents of abuse are unlikely to take place in front of another person. A Leader will always be present when working with or supervising children or youth. At a minimum a Leader who has been through the approval process will be in the room at all times. ***A Helper must never be left unsupervised.***

Parental permission must be obtained before transporting children or youth. Every effort should be made to ensure that the Leader is not alone in the car with children or youth. Where this is not possible, Leaders will take children and youth directly to and from arranged venues without deviating.

At all times, appropriate levels of privacy and confidentiality must be maintained in line with the Privacy Act.

Guidelines regarding Physical Contact

The guidelines below are recommended for anyone working with children and youth:

- While hugging, kisses and other forms of appropriate physical affection are important for a child's development, it is generally recommended that Leaders/Helpers do not engage in these activities in the church setting.
- Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the child or young person.
- Touching should be initiated by the child or youth. It should be a response to the child's need for comforting, encouragement, or affection. It should not be based upon the adult's emotional need.
- Touching and affection should only take place in the presence of others. It is much less likely that touches will be inappropriate or misconstrued as such when other adults are present, and the touching is subject to observation. This rule is especially important when changing a baby or helping a young child change clothes or use the toilet.
- Touching behaviour should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The behaviour of Leaders and Helpers must foster trust at all times and be above reproach.
- A child's preference not to be touched should be respected. Do not force affection upon a reluctant child.
- Leaders and Helpers are responsible to protect children under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others.
- Leaders and Helpers must promptly discuss inappropriate touching or other questionable behaviour with their Ministry Leader or Pastor.

Photography: Parental permission must be obtained before taking photos of children and youth. Permission must again be obtained if these photos are to be used publicly.

All aspects of every child or youth activity will be open to observation by parents/guardians.

Leaders have a right to ask people who do not have a valid reason to be present at child/youth activities to leave, as well as a responsibility to call for assistance if necessary

Dealing with Disclosures of Abuse

Any issues of suspected child abuse must be taken seriously. It is important that any disclosure is dealt with in an appropriate manner, that ensures the child's safety and wellbeing, and also ensures that the Leader's or Helper's actions do not jeopardise any future legal action against the abuser.

People who work with children can play a vital role in preventing child abuse, because, through regular contact, they may get to know the children and families as well. As a consequence, they may recognise changes in behaviour or appearance.

Guidelines for safe handling of any disclosures of Abuse

- Don't panic
- Believe children when they talk with you
- Stay with the child if they become upset and until they have said all they want to say
- Involve your Ministry Leader or Pastor as soon as there is a disclosure or even suspicion of abuse
- Document as soon as possible (preferably within 24 hours), what was said and what you have done as a result
- The safety and wellbeing of the child comes before the interests of any other person

Signs of Abuse

Behavioural Indicators

Leaders should look for a cluster of symptoms, rather than an isolated indicator. Children displaying one or more of the following behaviours may indicate their experience of abuse. These include:

- Lack of supervision, begging, or stealing food or clothing
- Sudden behavioural changes
- Fear or dislike of certain people, places or touch
- Afraid to go home or be with parents (running away from home)
- Problems with attention or discipline at school
- Antisocial, aggressive or destructive behaviour
- Withdrawal from activities or people
- Sleep problems
- Obsessive or poor hygiene
- Returning or regressing to more babyish behaviour
- Headaches or loss of appetite
- Depression, anxiety, irritability, low self worth
- Self harm
- Seeking/demanding extra attention
- Unusual interest in, or knowledge of, sexual organs or copying sexual behaviour

- Sexually active
- Indirect hints at, comments on, or increased interest in abuse
- Confusing or illogical explanations of injuries

Visual Indicators

- Abnormal or unexplained injuries
- Bruises
- Burns
- Cuts, abrasions or bite marks
- Broken bones
- Bald spots
- Pain when walking or sitting
- Pain or itching around genitals or when toileting
- Pregnancy
- Underdeveloped for age or constantly hungry
- Speech problems
- Poor hygiene or state of clothes

Responding to Allegations of Abuse

An allegation of harm is a serious matter and needs to be dealt with accordingly. Never minimise an allegation of harm or the impact it has on a child or youth. Dismissing an allegation may increase the effect of the harm and prolong the healing process. When harm is suspected or reported, it must be treated as an allegation or suspicion.

Any Leader or Helper who suspects abuse, or has a child disclose abuse to them must, as soon as practicable, discuss this with a Ministry Leader or Pastor.

They must also fully document (preferably within 24 hours) the suspicion and/or disclosure with a detailed transcript of what was said.

It is the responsibility of the Ministry Leader or Pastor to take any action and to ensure the correct procedure for recording, and responding to, concerns is followed.

Child abuse is best dealt with by specialist Police Officers who work alongside Oranga Tamariki to investigate concerns of abuse. Early intervention by child protection services reduces harm to victims before the abuse has the opportunity to escalate. It is not our role to prove that abuse or neglect is happening. Our obligation is to ensure that we have formed a belief that is based on reasonable grounds and is held in good faith. Our report may add to the information that the child protection services already have received from other sources.

Reports of abuse and/or neglect must be notified as soon as practicable so that an early assessment of the child's safety can be made.

It is always preferable that the parent/caregiver is involved and/or informed of any concerns but the first priority will always be the wellbeing of the child. This may require the Police or Oranga Tamariki to be contacted immediately if there are concerns about the child's immediate safety.

Procedure for Responding to Suspected Abuse

Once abuse is suspected or disclosed:

1. As soon as possible, talk to a Leader (in the case of a Helper), a Ministry Leader or Pastor. If the child is believed to be in immediate danger, the decision may be made to contact the Police immediately.
2. Write down everything, preferably within 24 hours. Provide a detailed transcript of what was said or observed with dates and times. Date and sign the document.
3. The Ministry Leader or Pastor will make an assessment as to whether there are reasonable grounds for contacting child protection services.
The bias must be to err on the side of notification. If unsure, contact Oranga Tamariki and discuss the situation.
4. Where the decision is made to notify, the suspected abuse will be reported to Oranga Tamariki. Once authorities have been notified they should be left to conduct the investigation.
5. Where there is an assessment that there are not reasonable grounds to notify, the Ministry Leader or Pastor will notify the Leader/Helper of this decision and will make arrangements for the situation to be closely monitored.
6. Ensure the child remains safe, is supported and accompanied throughout the process.