



Child and Young People Safety Code of Conduct

Purpose

This Code of Conduct outlines the expected and prohibited behaviours of all personnel (staff, volunteers, ministry leaders, contractors) when interacting with children and young people under 18 years, in alignment with ACC Safer Churches and national child safe principles. This document works in conjunction with the child and young people policies and procedures documents that are in place.

Scope

Applies to anyone involved in ministry, activities, or care with children at Wheatland District Church.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Code of Conduct outlines the required standard of acceptable conduct and explains the boundaries and behaviour expected when working with children and young people at WHEATLAND DISTRICT CHURCH, either on or off the Church property. This required standard of acceptable conduct and behaviour is in agreement with the VIC Child Protection legislation and the Australian Christian Churches Child protection policy and guidelines.

This code of conduct is not intended to provide a detailed and exhaustive list of what to do in every situation or circumstance. To ensure that a volunteer, paid staff or Pastor do not breach their boundaries and code of conduct, the following questions are helpful:

- Would I modify my behaviour if another person was present? (Sometimes you have to spell things out as someone may see their behaviour is fine eg smoking is ok, whereas others don't think that is fine)
- How would I feel about explaining my actions at a staff meeting?
- Am I sharing information for the child or young person's benefit, or for my benefit?
- Am I dealing with this child or young person differently from others in similar circumstances?
- Is my language or demeanour different from normal when dealing with this particular child or young person?

The Code obliges staff to complete online Safe Churches Certificate (renewed every three years) and are notified in who the Child Safe officer is within the Church, along with a hard copy of the reporting procedures. We offer an open-door policy to the Child Safety Person/s at WHEATLAND DISTRICT CHURCH will also provide clarification and support when guidance is required for any matters relating to children and young people.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

VOLUNTEERS, PAID STAFF, PASTORS AND BOARD MEMBERS

As volunteers, paid staff, Pastors and board members, you must: -

- Be aware of and abide by this Code of Conduct for Working with Children and Young People
- Follow all WHEATLAND DISTRICT CHURCH policies and procedures, along with State laws and guidelines.
- Uphold WHEATLAND DISTRICT CHURCH's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety at all times

- Treat all children and young people who attend WHEATLAND DISTRICT CHURCH and in the general community, with respect, courtesy, fairness and honesty
- Be vigilant and proactive with regard to child or youth safety and child protection issues
- Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children and youth with a disability
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of linguistically and culturally diverse children and young people including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
- Help provide an open, safe and supportive environment for all children and young people to interact and socialise
- Respect the privacy of children and young people and their families and only disclose information to people who have a need to know
- Report inappropriate conduct immediately via the reporting procedures WHEATLAND DISTRICT CHURCH have in place.
- The Roster Team is responsible for rostering on correct leaders to attendee's ratio.

CHILD SAFETY TEAM

- Be aware of and abide by this Code of Conduct including the responsibilities for working with children and young people
- Model the required conduct and behaviour identified in this Code of Conduct for working with Children and Young People
- Ensure all volunteers, paid staff, Pastors and Board Members have copies of this Code of Conduct for working with Children and Young people and related Policies and Procedures and are aware of the requirements and responsibilities of working with Children and young People
- Comply with mandatory reporting requirements, including mandatory reports of incidents involving children and young people including domestic and family violence, to Family and Community Services and the Children's Guardian if required
- Ensure that appropriate action is taken to address breaches of this Code of Conduct for working with Children and young People

THE SENIOR PASTOR

The Board of Directors delegates day-to-day management of the Church to the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor is ultimately responsible, and will be accountable, for taking all practical measures to ensure that:

- The Church's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and the Child Safety Program are implemented effectively with available resources effectively deployed
- Ensure Church Child Safety Person/s are appointed and trained
- A strong and sustainable child protection culture is maintained within the Church
- Any child protection incidents arising are dealt with professionally and in a timely manner
- The Church's Board receives regular reports with respect to child protection matters
- The Church is complying with its legal and regulatory obligations with respect to child protection.

BOARD MEMBERS

The Board is required to approve the Church's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and to ensure the Child Safety Program is being effectively implemented. Each member must:

- Acquire and keep up-to-date knowledge of child protection matters
- Have an understanding of the nature of the Church's operations and the child protection risks associated with these operations
- Ensure that the Church has appropriate resources to effectively implement its Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Child Safety Program

- Ensure that the Church has appropriate processes for receiving and considering information regarding child protection issues and is able to respond in a timely way to that information
- Ensure that the Church implements processes are compliant with its legal and regulatory obligations with respect to child protection
- Annually review the Reporting Procedures document (for within the Church) and update volunteers, paid staff, Pastors and Board Members on changes.
- Have an understanding of Risk Management and be responsible for contacting the Church Insurance company for advice when running high risk activities eg camps.
- Ensure the building is a safe environment, both interior and exterior, by regularly physically inspecting the property and prohibiting possible hazards and danger zones.
- Ensure all activities have a Risk Management plan in place.
- Ensure the Food Preparation and Storage Practices Guide is visible in kitchen

3. APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT

DO'S OF THIS CODE OF CONDUCT

- **DO** use positive and affirming language towards children and young people.
- **DO** encourage children and young people to 'have a say' and then listen to them with respect.
- **DO** provide age-appropriate supervision for children and young people in all programs and activities
- **DO** have another volunteer or paid worker present or in sight when you are talking or caring for a child or young person
- **DO** follow the personal care rules, policies and directions of Department heads when working with children and young people in organised programs and activities.
- **DO** avoid unnecessary physical contact with children and young people. Minimal, non-lingering, non-gratuitous physical contact in the context of the situation is acceptable. This can be a congratulatory pat on the back or handshake.
- **DO** identify, discourage and reject any advances of a sexual nature initiated by a child or young people.
- **DO** declare to your Pastor or leader any gifts or benefit given to you from children and young people or their families or any situation or circumstance that may be viewed as unethical or is illegal
- **DO** report conflict of interest concerns to the Child Safety Person as soon as practicable.
- **DO** intervene when children and young people are engaging in inappropriate bullying behaviour towards others or acting in a humiliating or vilifying way.
- **DO** protect the privacy of children and young people and keep their information confidential.
- **DO** be supportive of Children or Young People with developmental delays or disabilities.
- **DO** be aware and mindful of the indicators of grooming a child or young person for unlawful sexual activity.
- **DO** discuss any concerns with the Child Safety Person if you are unsure of any matter relating to the safety and protection of children and young people or any breach of this Code of Conduct. An offense is committed if a volunteer or paid worker, Pastor or board member is aware that an adult at WHEATLAND DISTRICT CHURCH poses a serious risk of abusing a child or young person including indicators of grooming, and fails to share this information with a Child Safety Person or the Senior Pastor.
- **DO** report concerns about child safety to one of the Church's Child Safety Persons and ensure that your legal obligations to report allegations externally are met Report behaviour to an WHEATLAND DISTRICT CHURCH Child Safety Person when this Code of Conduct is

breached or when conduct and behaviour may be contrary to the expectations of the WHEATLAND DISTRICT CHURCH Statement of Commitment to Children and Young People.

- **DO** ensure the safety of a child or young person when an allegation of child abuse is made
- **DO** call the Police on 000 if you have immediate concerns for a child or a young person's safety.
- **DO** dress appropriately and in a manner that maintains respect, establishes credibility and upholds the good reputation of the Church.

Off-Campus Children and Young People's Camps

DO have another volunteer or paid staff present when checking off sleeping arrangements or, transporting children, supervising of children and young people on camps or excursions and should be done, with respect of children and young people's privacy and personal space. It is not appropriate to have a casual conversation in a bedroom and it is not appropriate to sit on a child or young person's bed.

DO NOT'S OF THIS CODE OF CONDUCT

- **DO NOT** develop any "special" relationships with children or young people that could be seen as favouritism such as the offering of gifts or special treatment that could lead to the formation of an intimate relationship
- **DO NOT** give or exchange gifts including financial or material benefits with an individual child or young person or their parents/carers that is not available to all children and young people who attend WHEATLAND DISTRICT CHURCH. This can be interpreted as a grooming offence to access a child or young person for unlawful sexual activity.
- **DO NOT** initiate or develop a relationship with any child or young person that is or can be misinterpreted as having a personal, romantic or sexual, rather than professional basis including the following inappropriate behaviours:
 - flirtatious behaviour or dating
 - sexual relations
 - the use of sexual innuendo, inappropriate language and/or material with children and young people
 - unwarranted and inappropriate touching
 - unwarranted and inappropriate filming or photography
 - deliberate exposure to sexual behaviour of others such as pornography.

This is regardless of whether the relationship is consensual, non-consensual or condoned by parents/carers

The imbalance of power and authority that exists between the volunteer or paid staff and a child or young person does not cease after the child or young person ceases their engagement at WHEATLAND DISTRICT CHURCH. Volunteers and paid staff should not assume that they will be protected from disciplinary action by claiming that a relationship began only after the young person left the Church as there may be a reasonable belief that the emotional intimacy of the relationship developed while the young person was engaged with WHEATLAND DISTRICT CHURCH.

- **DO NOT** promise absolute confidentiality to children and young people, individuals or families as there are situations that require mandatory reports.
- **DO NOT** have personal contact with children and young people without a valid context or without another leader involved in the conversation via written or electronic means such as email, letters, telephone, text messages, social media sites, phone apps or chatrooms. Group chat maybe acceptable.
- **DO NOT** transmit any communication or download or store any digital material that is: discriminatory or harassing, derogatory, obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic, defamatory, threatening, for any purpose that is illegal or contrary to the WHEATLAND

DISTRICT CHURCH Codes of Conduct relevant to their position. In the case where such communication is received, it will be reported to the Child Safety Person.

- **DO NOT** send any electronic communication that attempts to hide the identity or represent the sender as someone else.
- **DO NOT** communicate electronically with Children under 16 years of age without full knowledge of the parent/s or carer/s of the Child or Young Person.
- **DO NOT** discuss or share any child or young person's information, observations or reports with anyone that does not have a need to know.
- **DO NOT** take any photos or videos of children or young adults, unless written permission is granted by parents, young adults themselves plus Pastors permission to take photos and videos for promotion purposes. These are not to be shared on personal social media accounts but shared with the Church Social Media Manager for optional posting on Church social accounts.
- **DO NOT** use drugs (illicit or recreational), alcohol and tobacco.

4. FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Where it is established that a volunteer or paid staff, contractor, Pastor or Board member has breached ACC Workers Code of Conduct, they may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of volunteering role, employment or contract.

Any breach of this code involving a criminal offence may lead to a report being made to the relevant authorities. Any breaches relating to the harm, or risk of harm, of a child or young person will be dealt with under the ACC Child Protection Policy.

5. AUTHORITY

This Policy has been authorised by the Senior Pastor and Board Members at WHEATLAND DISTRICT CHURCH.

6. RELATED POLICIES

Volunteers, paid staff including contractors and the Pastors and Board of WHEATLAND DISTRICT CHURCH are expected to comply with all policies and procedures and Codes of Conduct including

- WHEATLAND DISTRICT CHURCH Child and Youth Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- ACC WORKERS (PAID AND VOLUNTEER) CODE OF CONDUCT
- ACC WORKERS (PAID OR VOLUNTEER) DECLARATION
- ACC Safer Churches Guidelines

7. RELATED CONVENTION AND LEGISLATION

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- VIC Child and Young persons (care and protection) Act 2005
- Working with Children Act 2005

8. DECLARATION

- I have read this ACC Workers Code of Conduct for Working with Children and Young People and I agree to abide by this code of conduct for working with children and young people.
- I agree to be transparent and accountable to my leaders and the Child Safety Person/s at WHEATLAND DISTRICT CHURCH.
- I understand that a breach of this code will result in disciplinary action including termination of my volunteering role, employment or contract with WHEATLAND DISTRICT CHURCH.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Why this Code Matters:

- It's a core part of ACC's Safer Churches strategy and mandatory for credential holders and volunteers in child-focused ministry.
- Supports compliance with Victorian legislation and the Royal Commission's recommended Child Safe Standards.
- Embeds ethical, professional, and spiritually grounded leadership in all interactions with children.